

# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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“ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊಸ

ವಾತಾವರಣ

ಈಗ ಜನತೆಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ”

ಪರಿಶುದ್ಧ ಆಡಳಿತ ; ಸರಳ ನಡವಳಿಕೆ ; ಪ್ರಾಮಾಣಿಕ ಉದ್ದೇಶ ; ದಲಿತರ  
ಬಗೆಗೆ ಚಿಂತನೆ ; ಶಿಫ್ರ ಆಡಳಿತಕ್ರಮ — ಇವು ನಿಮ್ಮ ಈ ಹೊಸ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ  
ಗುಣಧರ್ಮಗಳು.

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ನೆರವು ನೀಡಬೇಕು ”.

ಜಯಪ್ರಕಾಶ್ ನಾರಾಯಣ್

ಪ್ರಕಟನೆ: ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ,

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ,

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು.

NEWSLETTER  
FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

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## Editorial

The New Year has not started well for the Editor as serious business problems have kept him away from Bird Watching and attending to the Newsletter. But things can always improve - and sometimes do.

As of date (28.1.83) the total subscriptions received amount to Rs.1743 from Subscribers. Some generous donations have also come in, but unless more subscriptions or donations or advertisements are received it will be difficult to produce even bi-monthly issues throughout the year.

There have been many complaints from persons who have not received the Newsletter during 1982 inspite of the Newsletter having been despatched. In most cases the Post Office is to blame, but extra care will be taken this year to ensure that no Subscriber is inadvertently left out from the mailing list. However, Subscribers are requested that their address is either typewritten or WRITTEN IN CLEAR BLOCK WORDS.

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Observation of the Birds of the Kochugaon Forest Dist.  
Goalpara, Assam by Dr.Sas.Biswas C/o.State Forest Service  
College-cum-Forest Research Centre, Burnihat, Assam/Meghalaya:  
 During recent excursions in lower Assam and the Assam-Bhutan border from 16.4.81 to 4.5.81 and 21.8.82 to 4.9.82 in connection with studies on the role of avifauna on our ecosystems with special reference to the distribution of plant species in North-Eastern Region several birds were observed. The identification was done with the aid of Dr.Salim Ali's book on Indian Birds (1972), and the Field Guide to the Birds of the Eastern Himalayas (1977).

Topography: Kochugaon forest is under the jurisdiction of Kochugaon Forest Division, Lower Assam Circle. On the map the area under investigation can be located in 90° - 15' to 91°E longitude and 26° - 40' to 26° - 20'N. latitude. Politically the area falls in the district Goalpara of Assam. The elevation varies from 90' in North to a few feet in the South. Moist tropical monsoon climate is responsible for the luxuriant vegetation of the area. The temperature on an average ranges between 70°F to 90°F. Cold weather temperature does not go below 50°F along the western boundary with the perennial Sankoch river the temperature ranges between 51°F to 109° in the month of July. Rainfall is one of the important factors behind the dense forest and inaccessible



undergrowth. It is recorded that the area under investigation experiences 0.24" rain in the month of December and as much as 48.37" in July. The region is drained by seasonal rivers namely Pekua, Polo, Gangia and Hel.

The dominant tree species of the forest providing food, shelter, nesting hollows are: Shorea (sal), Stereospermum, Terminalias, Toona, Amooras, Premna, Gmelina, Sterculia, Dillenia, Sygygiums, Bauhinias, Bombax, Schima, Anthocephalus (Kadam), Litseas, Lagerstoermias, Ficus sps., etc. The undergrowth with dominance of grasses like Saccharum, cyperus sps. and many aquatic species such as Alpinia, etc. provide an excellent habitat for the avifauna. It is interesting to report here that the birds like the great pied hornbill, golden oriole, various sps. of mynas, and bulbuls play an important role in the dispersal and distribution of several species of plants in the region. As the fruits of various plants are eaten by birds, the seeds of such plants being undigested find their way out through the excreta and ultimately germinate and help in regeneration of their plants. At the same time birds like blue jay, woodpeckers, drongos, tree pies, barbets, warblers, tits, etc. check the population of detrimental insects damaging forest crops.

Population of birds: The area has been visited by the author since 1980. On visits particularly during the month of March-April, the local tribals, santhals, have been found killing birds with the aid of poisonous arrows. Due to periodic forest fires the nests of various birds sometimes along with their fledglings and eggs are destroyed. In the part of the area where there are no man made fires the population of birds is quite satisfactory. As the main purpose of this article is to enumerate the various birds of the area under investigation, the significance of the avifauna in balancing the ecosystem is not described.

#### List of Birds

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Large pied Hornbill         | 13. Large Green Barbet            |
| 2. Red Junglefowl              | 14. Pied Myna                     |
| 3. Little Cormorant            | 15. Common Myna                   |
| 4. Black Drongo                | 16. Hill Myna                     |
| 5. Racket-tailed Drongo        | 17. Jungle Myna                   |
| 6. Hair-crested Drongo         | 18. Ring Dove                     |
| 7. Grey Drongo                 | 19. Spotted Dove                  |
| 8. Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo | 20. Emerald or Bronze-winged Dove |
| 9. Golden-backed Woodpecker    | 21. Turtle Dove                   |
| 10. Black-headed Oriole        | 22. House Crow                    |
| 11. Tree Pie                   | 23. Jungle Crow                   |
| 12. Himalayan Tree Pie         | 24. Scarlet Minivet               |

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| 25. Goldfronted chloropsis   | 43. Hawk Cuckoo                     |
| 26. Pond Heron   | 44. Little Grebe or Dadchick        |
| 27. Cattle Egret   | 45. Brown Dipper                    |
| 28. House Sparrow  | 46. Common Kite                     |
| 29. Blue Jay   | 47. Adjutant Stork                  |
| 30. Wood Shrike  | 48. White-breasted Kingfisher       |
| 31. Rufous-backed Shrike   | 49. Bengal Vulture                  |
| 32. Sooty Shrike   | 50. Shahin Falcon (seen on 25.8.82) |
| 33. Magpie Robin   | 51. Spotted Owlet                   |
| 34. Red-vented Bulbul  | 52. Shikra                          |
| 35. Yellow Bulbul  | 53. White Eye                       |
| 36. Black Bulbul   | 54. Crow Pheasant                   |
| 37. Hoopoe   |                                     |
| 38. Green Pigeon   |                                     |
| 39. Jungle Babbler   |                                     |
| 40. Grey-headed Flycatcher<br>warbler  |                                     |
| 41. Tailor Bird  |                                     |
| 42. Koel (I heard its<br>shrieking crescendo calls<br>Kuoo-kuoo-kuoo, on<br>17.4.81 and saw the<br>male bird on 18.4.1981) |                                     |

The above list is far from complete since the identity of many more birds such as tits, sunbirds, warblers, shrikes, thrushes etc. noted in my field books during the period under report could not be confirmed on account of insufficient information about the behaviour, food and calls. A note on the occurrence of peafowl deserves a mention here. It was reported that it is rarely observed now, but some ten years ago flocks of a hundred were not uncommon particularly along the Assam-Bhutan border. The reason for the depletion of species like peafowl, partridge and hornbills can be attributed to the killing by the local tribals.

The author would like to collaborate with those who are actively engaged in studies of the avifauna with special reference to the North-Eastern region of this country.

Acknowledgement: Thanks are due to Mr. P. Lahan, IFS, DFO & Mr. J. C. Dey ACF for valuable help and discussion during the course of studies.

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A Day at the Last refuge of the Great Indian Bustard by  
S. Ashok Kumar IAS, C/o. H.No. 10-3-283/5, Humayun Nagar,

Hyderabad 500028: On 31st January, 1982 by 8.30 am Mr. Gopal Sen, Forest Range Officer, Wildlife, Flying Squad, Ajmer division and myself reached Sonkhlia village on our way to Madhopura - the last refuge of the Great Indian Bustard (*Choriotis nigriceps*). We travelled 40 km in the station wagon criss-crossing the country track and cutting across the fields within the limits of Madhopura, Sokli, Sonkhlia and Loharwada villages for observing the GIB in its habitat.

The GIB conservation area of Sonkhlia, Ajmer Forest division, Rajasthan consisting of 17134 hectares is comprised of 12 revenue villages of Ajmer and Sarwar taluks. The terrain is plain with elevation ranging from 372 to 443 metres above MSL. In summer, the mercury touches 42°C while in winter it sometimes plunges to 2°C. Frost is fairly common during the winter season. The area is marked by low humidity receiving an annual rainfall of 400 mm with occasional winter showers known as "Mavata".

The area is dotted with trees which attain a height of not more than 4 metres. The common among them are Arunj (*Acacia leucopholoea*), Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*), Babul (*Acacia Nilotica*), Pilu (*Salvadora persica*), Vilayati Babul (*Prosopis chilensis*), Dhok (*Anogeissus pendula*), Pipul (*Ficus religiosa*) Bar ficus bengalensis, Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Siris (*Albizia lebek*), Imli (*Tamarindus indicus*), and Khujur (*Phoenix sylvestris*).

The shrubby vegetation consists of Jharberi (*Ziypus numularis*), Thore (*Euphorbia caduciforlia*), Dhatura (*Datura*), Aak (*Calotropis procera*), Khimp (*Leptadenia phyrotechnica*), Seniya (*Crotolaria Burhia*), and Andha Shishi (*Xanthium strumarium*).

Herbaceous flora is limited to Dudhi (*Euphorbia* spp.), Siyalbethana (*Lepidagathis trinervis*), Sankh pushi (*Evolvulus alsinioides*), Mundapath (*Leucas hirta*) and Sarithi (*Becrhaavia*).

The vegetation of the GIB conservation area is however dominated by various types of grasses such as Khas (*Vetiveria zizanioides*), Kaus (*Saccharum spontaneum*) Sawan (*Echinochloa colonum*), Dhaman (*Cenchrus setigerus*), Bhurat (*c. biflorus*), Lapla (*Aristida hystrix*) and Lasiurus scindicus.

Since the habitat is devoid of forests, the only control exercised by the Forest Department is restricting hunting for ten years in the conservation area u/s 37 of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Unlike Blackbuck and Chinkara, the GIB is not worshipped by the local Bishnoi community. However, being strict vegetarians, they help conserve the vanishing species of GIB.



Amidst the large cultivated tracts of Jowar, Bajra, Mustard, Groundnut and Bengalgram, are located six patches of open shrub vegetation adjoining Loharwada, Jaswantpur, Madhopura, Sonkhlia, Rumsar and Sanod villages and it is in these patches that the GIB is often seen in small flocks. Sonkhlia village, 40 kms from Amjer on Amjer-Kota Road and its surroundings is perhaps the only potential pocket of GIBs in our country.

The GIB locally called the GODAWAN is an essentially ground bird and a fast runner for which it is equipped with cursorial feet. Being ponderous, it takes six successively long steps before it is airborne to a low height and glides down at the first opportunity. During the breeding season (May to September), the cock develops a peculiar gular pouch in the throat and emits a deep moaning call audible up to 300 metres and hence it is called GUNJAN and HUKNA by the locals. Generally a shy and vigilant bird, it is not scared of cattle, cowherds and the noise of jeeps.

At Madhopura village, the wildlife watcher informed us that he had located a small group of GIBs the previous evening in the fields near the village. We therefore immediately headed for the site. After travelling 20 minutes, the watcher who had mounted on the station wagon, sighted 8 GIBs in a cultivated field. While we were cautiously approaching, they took to flight and within few minutes landed in a nearby field. As we were very anxious not to scare the birds, we followed a circuitous route and under the cover of an elevated earthen mound, stopped the vehicle and cautiously climbed the mound. Focussing my zenith binocular, I counted 5 males, 6 females and 4 young ones which was confirmed by the wildlife watcher. Walking sedately, the birds were searching out the insects, lizards and tender shoots. They were moving with a poise, and dignity of their own. When upright, the white neck and black crest are distinctly visible. The male birds, which are larger than the female birds, are generally wary and take to wing at the slightest suspicion. After watching them for full 30 minutes, we withdrew from the scene without disturbing the birds. It was a thrilling experience and a long cherished dream come true.

Mr. Gopal Sen informed me that the male bird measuring over a metre high weighs 14 kgs with a wing span of over 2 metres, while the female bird with a wing spread of less than a metre weighs 8 kgs. During his beats, he had witnessed two eggs being incubated by the GIB.

The conservation staff consisting of one Asst. Forester, two Wildlife watchers and one work-charged GIB watcher, under the supervision of Mr. Gopal Sen conduct census of the GIBs in



May-June when there are no crops and the water is so scarce. The following census figures indicate that the GIBs have atleast found a permanent niche in Rajasthan State.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of birds</u>
1980	37
1981	45
1982	53

With a devoted band of officers who are genuinely committed to the protection and preservation of the fast vanishing bird, it is hoped that the GIB, which once roamed the open flat grasslands of the Indian peninsula freely in huge flocks, will stage a comeback with vengeance. It is gratifying to note that the GIB has been declared as the State bird by the Rajasthan Government.

Small habitats of GIBs are also found in Karnataka (Raichur Dist.), Maharashtra (Ahmednagar, Sholapur, Aurangabad and Karnal Dists.), Gujarat (Jamnagar Dist.), Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (Mahaboobnagar and Kurnool Dists.). In Rajasthan they are found in Kikaner, Barmer, Jaisalmer and parts of Jodhpur districts.

Few people realise that the GIB, one of the world's largest flying birds, is strictly endemic to the Indian sub continent and found nowhere else in the world. Victim of indiscriminate poaching and loser of natural habitat, it may disappear before our eyes in the same way as the Pinkheaded duck, Mountain Quail and the Jerdon's Courser. It is therefore imperative that special projects are taken up to study the ecology, breeding and population of the GIB and ways and means found to protect and preserve this spectacular bird in the several regions where it still exists.

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Occurrence of Four Black Ibis (*Pseudipis papillosa*) in South India by R.Kannan C/o. 33, Saravana Street, T.Nagar, Madras 600 017: On 22nd of June 1982 I saw a Black Ibis on the roadside while on a drive from Mandapam camp to Tuticorin. The exact location lies about 2 km. south of the coastal hamlet of Kilakarai (Latitude 9.20 N). About 40 km. further South-West near Sayalkudi I saw three more Black Ibis walking along open grasslands quite far from water.

This is perhaps one of the very few records of the Bird occurring in Southern India. The range of the Black Ibis as stated in 'Book of Indian Birds', within our limits is 'The drier portions of the Indian Union (excepting the western seaboard) south to Mysore'.

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Roost sites of birds around Jodhpur by Indra Kumar Sharma, Bhagwati Bhavan, Ratanada Road, Jodhpur 342 020: Birds are choosy about their roosting sites both for comfort and safety. My studies on roosting sites around Jodhpur and the Thar Desert revealed some interesting ornithological and ecological aspects.

The different types of roosting sites observed are presented in the Table 1.

<u>Ground</u>	<u>Stout tree</u>	<u>Medium tree</u>	<u>Dense shrub</u>
Sandgrouse	Bengal vulture	Egrets	Bulbuls
Blackbellied	Scavenger vulture	Shrike	Sunbird
<u>finchlark</u>	Peafowl	Bee-eater	Warbler
<u>Thorney or</u>	Kite	<u>Ficus trees</u>	Tailor bird
<u>Sparce</u>	Shikra	Mynas	<u>Hollow of tree</u>
			<u>trees</u>
<u>Shrub</u>	<u>Rocks or clefts</u>	Rosy pastor	Owl
Babblers	<u>of houses</u>	Starling	Owlet
Doves	Pigeon	Parakeet	Hoopoe
Partridge	Robin		
Munia	House sparrow		

The reveals that large and heavy birds e.g., the peafowl and Bengal vulture (*Gypus bengalensis*) like stout branched trees e.g., Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*), Banyan (*Fice bengalensis*), Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), Khejara (*Prosopia cineraria*) and Albizzia lebbeck. Branches of these trees can bear their weight and have also convenience to move as branches of these trees are sparce enough. It is note-worthy that medium side large birds as Scavenger vulture (*Nephron percanopterus*), egrets and Grey shrike prefer medium size tree is., not full grown Peepal, Neem and Kejara trees suit to their weights and movements and also to avoid conflict with large size birds at large trees. But birds of prey eg., Shikra and Pariah Kite (*Milvus migrans*) prefer large trees probably for better direct landing and take off facility at such trees. It was observed that bulbuls (*Pycnonotus cafer*, *P.leucogynus*), Purple sunbird and Indian wren warbler prefer dense shrubs eg., Tecome stans, Bougainvillea species and Jasmines spp in gardens of towns and Capparis, Zizyphus and Maytenus, Tecomella undulata and Salvadora spp in countrysides. It was noted that the babbler, doves, Grey partridge and White throated munia prefer thorny or sparce branched large shrubs or small trees eg., Prosopia juliflora, Bougainvillea and Theveia etc. in towns and Prosopis cineraria, Zizyphus spp and Capparis decidus in countrysides. It appears that Ficus trees are most preferred and suitable roost trees for birds. It was noted that the Rock-pigeon (*Columbia livia*) naturally roosts at clefts of rocks, but has adapted well to roost on projections of buildings in villages and towns. The Bengal vulture and Scavager vulture also roost in clefts of rocks wheresoever available.

The sandgrouse and blackbelled finch lark (Eremopterix grisea), roost on the ground preferably under or adjoining a bush or stone. The Wattled lapwing roosts on the ground close to a rainpool or wasteland. The spotted owl and hoopoe (Upupa epops) roost in tree holes of P.cineraria, Tecomella and Albizzia lebbek. It was noted that some birds have developed notable commensalism with man for roosting around towns and villages. The pigeon largely roosts on projections of houses and electric transmission lines on streets. The peafowl prefers to roost in villages rather than in the countryside presumably to enjoy protection by villagers. The house crow, the Roseringed parakeet, Rosy pastor and sterling (Sturnus vulgaris) always prefer to roost in groves around busy human sites such as railway stations, bus-stands and public parks, again presumably for safety against predators.

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Bird watchers flock to reserves in record numbers:

By Cyril Bainbridge: A wall chart at the Headquarters of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds presents graphic evidence of the increase in interest in bird watching over the past decade. It records a rise in the society's membership from 71,000 in 1971 to 340,000 last year.

For every member there are reckoned to be four people interested in bird watching; there are, therefore, probably more than a million bird watchers in Britain.

Officials attribute the growth to several factors. There is a greater awareness of wild life and conservation; people have more time and are better able to get into the countryside; they are increasingly extending their interest beyond just walking; and television programmes and broadcasts on wild life have captured the attention of many more people.

"If you are out for a walk it is nice to see something of nature in the countryside that you have not seen before. That gives most people great satisfaction", Mr. Gerald Searle, an official of the society, said, "Or they see a rare bird pop up in their garden and it gives them a thrill."

Bird watching, he added, was part of the British character. "We are a nation of animal lovers. We also love birds and have a more sentimental outlook about them than Continental countries".

The society has 80 nature reserves. Its policy is to buy as many reserves as possible before they are threatened to ensure the preservation of the birds' habitat. If it is unable to buy the land the society tries to arrange management agreements.



An appeal for £1m a few years ago brought a large response from members and enabled the society to buy a reserve at Minsmere on the Suffolk coast and an osprey site on Speyside in Scotland.

The Minsmere site is one of the society's star reserves, so popular that bird watchers' visits there had to be limited.

The enormous growth of interest has put pressure on many other reserves, but, Mr. Searle said, there is little danger of the birds being disturbed at Minsmere. Hides there, for instance, overlook a lagoon and weeds and other natural cover protect the birds but do not prevent the watchers from observing them through binoculars.

Some bird watchers, it is admitted, can become over-enthusiastic. They are the fanatics of the world of ornithology. They are nicknamed "twitchers" and "tickers", the former because they twitch with excitement at the prospect of sighting a rare bird and the latter because they dash home to tick it off on their list of sightings.

Such fanatics, hearing on the grapevine of the arrival of an unusual species, travel long distances, sometimes throughout the night, to sight the bird in the quiet dawn.

"Sometimes they do not perhaps take sufficient account of the feelings of landowners and farmers over whose land they trample, or they may harry and chivvy exhausted migrant birds to get a sighting", Mr. Searle said. "But generally bird watchers do keep the welfare of the bird at heart".

Criticism of such activities led the society to issue a code of conduct designed to ensure that bird watchers respect the welfare of the bird, its habitat and the role of the landowner.

Interest in bird watching is encouraged from a young age. The society runs a club for ornithologists aged from six to fourteen, which has 110,000 members, many of whom will later transfer to the main society.

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Grass for the Geese, and Crops for the Farmers (London Times):  
Mr. Peter Carr farms 300 acres on the edge of the Blackwater estuary in Essex. On a field half a mile or so from his house are feeding hundreds of Brent geese (above), joined at intervals by more flights wheeling in gracefully over the sea wall.



For some reason the geese have always preferred this particular field (John Young writes). This year for the first time Mr. Carr was persuaded not to plant crops but to leave it under grass. As a result the birds are content to leave the surrounding crops undisturbed.

Finding an acceptable means of protecting both the thousands of geese that migrate to southern and eastern England each winter, and the crops on which they feed and trample, has been exercising bodies like the Ministry of Agriculture and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for some years.

Since the mid-1970s the numbers of geese have risen sharply. Between 60,000 and 80,000 arrive on the coast each October, as far north as the Humber and as far west as the Exe in Devon. But about half choose the estuaries of East Anglia and Essex, such as the Orwell, the Stour, the Blackwater, the Colne and the Crouch.

Mr. Andrew St. Joseph, a ministry biologist, is encouraging more farmers to follow Mr. Carr's example and leave certain fields as "refuge" grassland, treated where necessary with fertilizer to encourage a lush growth. He reports "marvellous cooperation" from farmers and encouragement from the National Farmers' Union, which has agreed to finance part of the survey.

Mr. Carr seems happy about the scheme, provided enough of his colleagues agree to participate. "I don't mind feeding the geese for a time", he says, "but I don't want to be the only farmer in Essex doing it".

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### Correspondence

Flamingoes in Badami Taluka-Karnataka by S.Rangaswami, 'Gopala', 21-E South Avenue Tiruvanmiyur Madras 600041:  
On August 23, 1982 Mr. S.T. Ramesh, IPS, Supdt. of Police, Bijapur, Master Hari Vivek - both, members of our Newsletter fraternity of birdwatchers - and I were going by car along the road abutting the bund of Kendoor Khere - a big tank of about 4 sq.km. area, about 10 km. from Badami on the Badami-Pattadakal route. It was about 1 pm then and we found a large number of water birds at various spots in the tank which had lots of dry patches with water, not more than one to two feet deep here and there. We could see plenty of Little Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Dabchicks, Large Egrets, quite a number of Moorhens, a solitary Grey Heron and a large number of Pintails. As we were watching these through our binoculars, much to our delight and surprise, we saw fourteen Lesser Flamingoes feeding in their characteristic fashion, totally free from disturbance of any kind from

humans or animals. We watched them for about half an hour and left the place much against our wish to complete the rest of our visit programme which included Pattadakal, Aihole etc. We do not know whether the Flamingoes are regular visitors to this area. I suggested to Mr. Ramesh to make enquiries about them during his future official visits to the area and to advise the villagers through his local police staff not to harm the birds which visit the tank since it was teeming with bird life and the birds appeared to feel safe there.

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Flamingo in Husein Sagar by Nazir Latif, Latifia 8-2-675, Road 13, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034: You may be interested to hear that on an outing on a yacht on Husein Sagar, which, as you may remember, is right in the middle of the city, one day early in December, I saw a solitary flamingo flying about. It circled the lake for some time and on one of its circuits passed quite close to us and was a glorious sight. It was the first time I had seen out of a zoo and it was a glorious bird. I notified Nadir Bhai the next day and he told me later that two visits to the lake which he made subsequently did not reveal any sighting of the flamingo. A pity.

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Extract from a letter on a Visit to Australia by Jeffrey Y Campbell, 8-B-12 Greater Kailash, Enclave 11 New Delhi 110 048: I was out of India on a visit to Australia and Tasmania, where the marsupial mammals, unique blend of gum and pine vegetation, and the enchanting variety of 'new' birds all contributed to a most rewarding first visit. One of the most impressive aspects of Australia was the organisation of her National Parks. Camp sites, nature walks (complete with keyed in pamphlets descriptive of salient plant or animal life en route), full scale trekking trails and emphasis on individual responsibility of visitors made a 'bushwalk' or a birding trip convenient without interfering with the wildness of the experience. Australia has a very impressive range of Honey eaters (Family Meliphagidae) which specialise. Somewhat like our Sunbirds, on nectar-bearing flowers. They seem to occur in every vegetational zone thriving especially in eucalypt and accacia forest. They vary enormously in size and appearance and all sing beautifully. The large wattlebirds, with unusual names like Noisy Friarbird, have long red, blue or yellow wattles which hang from the neck (lower down than our Jungle Mynah's), are marvellous mimics and give vent to curiously loud croaks and whistles. All members of the family possess the long decurved bills which they use to probe for nectar and from which their long flexible tongues search out the delicate interior sweetnesss. Seabirds, particularly

Shearwaters and Petrels, Albatross' and the Fairy Penguin were also conspicuous in their variety, but what I found remarkable were the Parrots (Psittacidae) and Cockatoos (Cacatuidae). The outlandish colouration of the Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) (Family: Loriidae) and the Eastern Rosella (*Platycercus eximus*) have to be seen to be believed. They wheel through the sky in huge shrieking flocks like our Parakeets. The huge Yellow-tailed Black Cuckatoos of Tasmania (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) fly with the loose bouyancy of nightjars over the gigantic Blue gum and myrtle forests of the heavily forested South West. And on the extensive peaty bogs of button grass crouch the illusive Ground Parrot (*Pezporus wallicus*) which I, unfortunately was unable to see.

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*Cover Picture:* Common Green Bee - Eater — Courtesy E. HANUMANTHA RAO

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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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VOL. XXIII NO. 3 & 4 MARCH - APRIL 1983



**" COPY "**

### **Madhya Pradesh : The Guardian State**

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**FORESTS ARE FOR OUR WELFARE : LET US SAVE THEM**

NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

Vol. XXIII

No. 3 & 4

March-April 1983

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## Editorial

I have generally looked with contempt on publications which lift material from other sources, and I have followed the policy of carrying original notes produced for the Newsletter, even though their content from the viewpoint of interest or information was minimal. But I am beginning to doubt whether we should not have a mix of both original and second hand material, and provide our readers with a pick of the best.

I have also in this issue made an exception in carrying M.S. Swaminathan's speech delivered at the inaugural session of the SSC meeting in Delhi. I happened to be present on the occasion and I agree with Peter Scott that this was one of the most intelligent speeches delivered in conservation forums. Since birdwatchers have traditionally been the leaders of conservation I hope our readers will welcome this decision. If you disagree please protest so that I may be restrained from such "externalities" in future.

Pali Hill revisited by Aamir Ali, 14 ch. Tourelle, 1209 Geneva: In recent years, I have visited Pali Hill, Bombay, where my father lives, at least once every other year. Pali hill would be a good case study of a garden suburb that has been transformed into a congested housing settlement. If I had been a scientific birdwatcher, I would have kept a fascinating record of the changes that have taken place and their effect on bird life.

In 1977, Salim Ali wrote me a description of the birds of the area since 1924-25 and this was published in the Newsletter of March 1977. He said that there used to be some 40 or 50 species to be seen in Pali Hill in the good old days. They seem very far away now.

I spent a fortnight at Pali hill in December 1982 - January 1983. In view of the high rise buildings built cheek by jowl, the heavy hooting traffic, the elimination of such impediments to progress as trees, and the complete mastery of the air gained by crows, it was encouraging that there were some other birds still alive and kicking. The first cheerful announcements were the brave notes of the Koel and Coppersmith.



Even more defiant was the Tailor bird, shrilly refusing to be cowed down by the general death and destruction all around. I thought that this time Tailor birds were rather more audible and visible than before. That I saw more of them than on previous visits, I am certain. Could it be that my aging eyes are getting sharper? Or that these cocky little birds have decided to show evolution a thing or two and have adapted to the conditions of modern life? If so, they seem to have done this better than human beings. In fact, one might say with Kipling, you're a better man than I am, Darzee bird.

The cyclone of early December had brought down a huge branch of the one mango tree still left in the garden. This fallen branch had been chopped and piled up in a corner. Very often there was at least one, sometimes two, Tailor birds hopping in and out of this pile. What juicy grubs or insects bred in that deadwood for their delectation?

This storehouse of nourishment also attracted a Whitespotted Fantail Flycatcher, perhaps the last of his breed left in the area. The handbook tells us that both this Flycatcher and the Tailor bird are found even in noisy cities. I think that Pali Hill has achieved the status of a noisy city.

A Magpie Robin was still around but it had the defeated look of a migrant in Assam. He is described as "shy, silent and unobtrusive during the non-breeding season, skulking in shrubbery". Well, who wouldn't nowadays? Salim Ali told me that for three years this poor Magpie Robin's hopes of raising a family had ended in the maws of crows. Perhaps he has reached the end of his dynastic line.

The brightest bit of colour that came my way was a Golden Oriole, the first I had seen in Pali hill for many years. I saw him twice, assuming that he was the same one; I couldn't really believe that there could be two. The first time he was an unbelievable patch of gold in a mango tree - the mango tree, I should say. He was immediately chased away by a crow who wasn't going to put up with such unfair competition in his own, his native land. The second time, he was in another tree and remained long enough to allow for a really good look. I wonder if the brave and beautiful creature ever realised what a boost he gave to our morale.

The birds that really have it good are, of course, the crows. Kites and sparrows do all right, but the crows have come into their own. Though I took no censuses nor made any bird counts, I have no hesitation in saying that their numbers have continued to increase. Its rather like the population of Bombay city. Every time you visit it, you say to yourself, the numbers can't possibly increase any more, people will be pushed off into the sea and be washed away to Arabia or the Gulf and drowned in oil. Yet they continue to increase.

Well, so do the crows of Pali hill. There is a gul mohur tree in our garden and this has been taken over by crows and there isn't much gul or mohur left. It is their headquarters, their High Command, their Lok Sabha, their Chowpatty, their coffee house, their fortress. No other bird dare approach it, not even a Kite.

At dusk, the tree sprouts a bumper harvest of black fruit. When something disturbs the crows, a black, cawing cloud rises - blacker than any monsoon cloud - to spread fear and cacophony throughout Pali hill. It is a sight fitter for a Hitchcock film than real life. If Oscar Wilde could see it, he would certainly repeat his astonishment at the way Nature imitates Art.

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Birdwatching in Dodda Gubbi on 25.2.1983 by .Zafar Futehally, Dodda Gubbi Post, Via Vidya Nagar, Bangalore 562134: The 25th of February was an unusually hot day in Bangalore and the temperature touched 34 degrees in the afternoon. There was no breeze at all and it is claimed that this is one of the driest seasons of the century. There has been no rain since the 5th of November and well levels are lower by several feet than even last years low levels.

When I stepped out of the house at 4.30 in the evening I had expected to see very few birds but during a two hour walk I ended with an encouraging tally of 40 species, and I will comment briefly on what I saw, and what I did not.

Common mynas were numerous but there was no sing of the jungle myna which are often around. Several years ago I had seen a flock of greyheaded mynas in one of the small groves of multilated trees by the side of the :

village road and I hope they have not abandoned Dodda Gubbi for good. The population of whiteheaded babblers is increasing rapidly and there is now a largish flock of thirty or so in our garden. They seem to be less quarrelsome than the Jungle babblers and one does not hear the loud arguments associated with the latter species. What is the reason for the absence of jungle babblers here? The habitat seems ideal for them with plenty of shade and thick leaf litter under the mango trees. Our Mali stepped on a Russels Viper the other day. The viper was relaxing among the dry fallen leaves of a Cassia tree and fortunately was not too quick on the uptake.

In an extremely dry and dusty field where the only vegetation was the remnant of the regi stubbles, and a single Karanj and Odina Wodier tree, a pair of purplerumped sunbirds were moving amongst the foliage. Any area with sunbirds around becomes exciting. Audubon referred to hummingbirds as glittering fragments of the rainbow. The expression is equally applicable to sunbirds. The cheering laughter of the whitebreasted kingfisher was answered by the equally reassuring call of the goldenbacked woodpecker and I was most surprised that these birds managed to flourish in such an arid environment. But more surprises were to follow: Common sandpipers and little ringed plovers soon appeared on the scene. The Dodda Gubbi lake, which still had a few acre inches of water left was half a kilometre away and that is where these birds should have been. A redwinged bush lark treated me repeatedly to its courtship display parachuting down cleverly on only one outstretched wing, and black-bellied finch larks were just commencing to indulge in their breath taking nose-dives.

When I reached the lake I found a large congregation of water birds little stints, spotted sandpipers, green shanks, blackwinged stilts, blackheaded yellow and yellow wagtails, and one white wagtail, several species of duck, grey heron, pond herons, cattle and median egrets and some more. What excited me was a pair of painted snipe which flew up noisily when I was just a few feet from them. I looked up How to know the Indian Waders by F. Finn and some of you may be interested in his description.

The "Painter" has the fluttering straight-on-end flight of a Rail, and the same slovenly habit of letting its legs hang down when starting; it runs and skulks, and does not rise readily. It is not nearly so good to



eat as a snipe; its flesh is paler and its bones harder; while it has none of the genuine and delicious snipe flavour. This bird has a curious display by which it seeks to terrorize an enemy. When slightly alarmed, it raises the wing furthest from the intruder; if pressed, this wing is fully expanded, while in desperation the bird faces its adversary with both wings and tail spread so that their beautiful spotted markings are fully shown. Meanwhile a hissing or swearing note, like hot iron plunged into water, is given off. I have no doubt that the natives who told Hume that the birds showed off to each other in this way in the breeding season were quite correct in their statements, as I have often noted cases in which various birds used the same gestures to express anger or fear as they display in courtship. As the male "Painter" is the inferior sex, it is interesting that he sits on the eggs, and that the female appears to keep company with more than one male. The bird breeds, in one place or another, almost the whole year through; and in specially favourable localities, with a suitable water supply, there seem to be two broods a year. The nest is usually a pad of grass, etc., on the ground, but it may be a mere depression, or raised up on the grass on which it is built. There are four eggs, smaller than those of the true Snipes, of a more or less stone-colour, with large markings of dark brown, almost black. The chicks are clad in buff-coloured down with dark brown stripes, and will take to the water readily. The female "Painter" has the wind-pipe much longer than the male, and disposed in a loop, but I have not noticed the alleged difference in her note.

For the first time I have seen a pair of blackheaded cuckoo shrikes in our garden and I like to think that they will nest in the Cassia in which they appear to take some interest. A hoopoe is feeding its young in the nest below the mangalore tile on the roof. A pied bush chat seems to be staking its territory for the breeding season for it sings from several high points in the obvious attempt to make itself noticed by intending intruders. Golden orioles, tree pies, koels, blyths reed warbler, tailor birds, black drongos, common swallows, rose ringed parakeets, blue jays ioras, crow pheasants all help to make the human habitat more interesting than it was when we moved in here on 3rd July 1975 - when the trees and the birds were both absent. Then we had larks and pippits on the open ground, these have been replaced by the arboreal birds to which I have referred.

Ringed Plover at the Adyar Estuary, Madras by V.Santharam,  
10, Leith Castle South St. Santhome, Madras 600 028:  
 According to the "Handbook" (Volume-2) by Dr.Salim Ali and Dr.Ripley, the Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) is a rare straggler or a very rare winter visitor to India. There are few records of it in India from Gilgit, Sultanpur, Maldiva islands and also two authentic sight records from Karechi and Jaffna Peninsula (Sri Lanka). Of late, (1974 if I remember right), some specimens were obtained by Mr. Humayun Abdulali from Pt.Calimere (Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu).

This species closely resembles the common Little ringed plover (C.dubius) from which it may be distinguished by larger size and dumper appearance, the yellow base of the bill with a black tip and the absence of the white line on the forecrown (present in C.dubius). In flight, the hiaticula has a white wingbar (absent in dubius). The colour of the legs are orange. While 'Hamlyn Guide to birds of Britain and Europe' describes the call as a mellow 'choo-ee' the 'Birds of S.E.Asia' records it as a 'mellow, whistled tu-weep, the second note higher in pitch'. In my own experience, the call and the presence of wingbar are good clues to its identity.

During the course of my birdwatching at the Adyar Estuary since 1978, I have had ample opportunity to watch this species here. I have already reported about my first encounter with it on 5.4.1979 in the volume XX, No.3 of the 'Newsletter'. A year later, on 4.4.1980, I noticed 1-2 birds again. In 1981, they were present here between 25.3.81 and 26.4.81 and they were seen on 6 different occasions. In 1982, they were observed on 9 instances between 15.1.82 and 18.3.82.

I have usually seen them in small flocks of 2-5, occasionally as a solo. on 11.4.81, I saw the largest congregation of nearly dozen individuals in a loose flock, some of which were mixed with little stints and little ringed plovers. They were present generally on the mudflats or the islets, near the edge of the water. On many instances they were quite vocal and I had the benefit of listening to their rather melodious notes. I have also noticed them in flight.

All these sightings suggest that the hiaticula is not as rare as it is supposed to be and that a few do occur within our limits regularly. I am sure they are being

overlooked and mistaken for dubius. It is hoped that this note would induce some of our readers to look out for this species in their localities and help in throwing more light on its occurrence within our limits.

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The Globetrotting Cattle Egret, Courtesy Bird Watchers Digest, March-April 1982 and Florida Wildlife by Max Hunn: Most people travelling Florida or southeastern highways pay little attention to the white birds persistently following cattle and horses, or eagerly treading newly-plowed furrows behind tractors. If they do notice, many assume the birds are snowy (Egretta thula) or great (American) egrets (Casmerodius albus), but they are wrong. Few recognize the stocky birds walking with the livestock as cattle egrets (Bubulcus ibis).

Fewer still are aware that this bird mysteriously migrated from its native lands in Europe and Africa to establish itself in the Western Hemisphere without the aid of man. Fortunately, the migration has not been disastrous as have some of man's attempts to fool Mother Nature, such as the introduction of the European carp. (This fish instead of becoming a welcome food source, became an undesirable in American waters).

The cattle egret, known in Europe and Africa as the buffbacked heron and sometimes the cow heron arrived in the United States in the 1940s. Its arrival was quiet and unnoticed. The first observer was Willard Dilley who sighted a pair near Clewiston on the south shore of Lake Okeechobee. His discovery went unheralded. However, because he could obtain no physical evidence - film or specimen - and he assumed they were escapees rather than migrating birds.

It was eleven years later that the invasion was discovered officially. Richard Borden, a Massachusetts wildlife cameraman, photographed a cattle egret near Lake Okeechobee in 1952. He thought it was a snowy egret. However, when his movie film was developed, the bird was correctly identified. News of his discovery alerted every bird enthusiast in the country. The invasion was no longer a secret, although the birds route of arrival is still a matter of conjecture.



It wasn't hard to explain why the cattle egrets escaped notice for eleven or so years. They are easily mistaken for snowy egrets and immature little blue herons. However, each species does have exclusive characteristics making them easily identifiable. The cattle egret, a stocky bird, has a yellow bill, puffy jowls, buff-colored wash on head, back, and breast when nesting, and yellow and greenish-black feet. The all white snowy egret has a black bill, black legs, and yellow feet. The immature little blue heron has a dark bill, all white feathers, and dark green feet and legs.

When word spread of the cattle egret's presence in North America, bird watchers began filing reports from widely scattered areas. Obviously, the bird had not been satisfied with just establishing a Florida beachhead. It was sighted in New Jersey and also in Chicago.

Despite the scattered reports, it was uncertain whether the birds were multiplying or merely engaging in the wandering habits they were noted for in the Old World. If they weren't roaming, they were either nesting successfully, or they were increasing in numbers as others somehow managed to follow from their original homelands. It seemed hardly probable, but it was possible. If it happened once, it could happen again.

Samuel A. Grimes, noted Jacksonville, Florida, bird photographer, provided the answer to the nesting question on May 5, 1953, when he photographed a cattle egret's nest in a heron rookery on King's Bar in Lake Okeechobee. His were the first such pictures taken in the United States, and probably in the Western Hemisphere. Returning to King's Bar three weeks later, he photographed fledglings in three nests. The cattle egrets were multiplying.

Once spotted, it became evident cattle egrets were establishing colonies outside of the Lake Okeechobee area. Their nests were found near Gainesville, and in an eighty-acre tract in the Myakka State Park east of Sarasota. Today, the bovine-loving birds are found throughout most of the eastern United States, along the Gulf Coast into Texas, as far west as California and Washington, and northward into New Brunswick and Newfoundland. Nesting has occurred as far north as Ontario, Canada. In less than thirty years, cattle egrets have probably become the most plentiful egret species in North America.

When they became aware of the cattle egrets' population explosion, many ornithologists worried that the interloper might crowd out native herons. Fortunately, this has not been the case. While studying a central Florida rookery, Dr. William J. Weber, a Leesburg veterinarian, found no evidence of conflict among the various herons.

Weber found cattle egrets nesting with Louisiana herons, snowy egrets, and anhingas. Frequently the cattle egrets nested within six inches of heron nests. He also observed that, because cattle egrets nest in compact colonies, they seldom use a large proportion of the heron-egret sites available in any suitable area.

Fortunately, there seems to be no competition for food. While the cattle egret feeds upon insects disturbed by livestock, the bulk of the native herons' diet consists of fish and frogs obtained in streams, marshes, and along lake shores, or coastal estuaries.

A rumor that cattle egrets were eating quail eggs resulted in a study by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Mike Fogarty, a commission biologist, analyzed the stomach contents of one thousand birds and determined that their diets consisted mainly of grass-hoppers, crickets, spiders, flies, and beetles. Occasionally a cattle egret will eat a fish or an egg, but such items are not diet staples. Because the "cow bird" is often seen perched on the backs of cattle, some people assumed ticks are a part of its diet. But Fogarty's study showed that ticks were a very minor part.

Ornithologists are not only intrigued by the presence of the peripatetic birds, but also by the question of how they arrived in the United States. Records show that the bird breeds in southern Spain and Portugal; in North Africa from Morocco to Egypt; south of the Sahara to South Africa; in Asia; in southwestern Arabia and Syria; in Transcaucasia and northern Iran; and on islands in the Indian Ocean.

The wandering bird also is found on the coasts of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, in Iraq, and occasionally in Britain, Denmark, Hungary, southeastern Russia and the Canary and Madeira islands. A few have even made their way to Iceland. They are truly cosmopolitan creatures, adaptable to many geographic environments but associated with cattle, water buffalo, horses and other livestock.

From Africa to Florida and the United States is a long, long way. Backtracking the probable route, Dr. Alexander Sprunt, Jr., noted ornithologist, found reports of cattle egrets in South America in the late 1930s and 1940s. They were seen in British Guiana, Surinam (Dutch Guiana), Venezuela, Colombia, and Bolivia. He concluded the birds crossed the South Atlantic in some manner.

The most popular theory is that a flock of cattle egrets were caught in a tropical storm and were blown approximately two thousand miles from Africa to South America. Flying at forty miles an hour, they could make the trans-Atlantic hop in about fifty hours. That's not jet speed, yet it's feasible for the strong, feathered fliers, particularly if aided by a strong tail wind or blown by a tropical storm.

Once established in South America, it is theorized that the cattle egrets engaged in their propensity to wander, moving northward into the Canal Zone and through Central America, eventually arriving unnoticed in Florida. Whether they came via Central America, island hopped, or both is uncertain.

Although the cattle egret gets its name from its association with cattle, it does not restrict its company to cattle alone or even other livestock. It will follow a tractor or mower, feeding on the insects disturbed by these machines. The birds are opportunists. In addition to eating the insects disturbed by moving livestock, they will dine wherever there is a concentration of food.

They have been known to flock to the scene of a brush fire to gulp the bugs flushed by the flames. They also stir up their own food when they can't find cattle to do it for them. They have been seen leapfrogging over each other in fields, stirring up insects.

Cattle egrets have been seen hopping aboard cows' backs, riding across canals, then hopping off on dry land with no protests from the cows. Why fly when you can get a free ride? But they didn't get a free ride when they arrived here thirty or more years ago. Undoubtedly, they did a lot of flying.

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Extracts from a speech on Environmental Protection in India by Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, on the occasion of the SSC meeting in New Delhi: .....a limited amount of organised effort has been started in the area of preventing gene erosion. Even this has been a long struggle for the simple reason that, unlike soil erosion, which is visible to the eye, gene erosion is not seen and hence not understood. With thousands of years of human selection and even with modern techniques of induced mutation it will not be possible to get the wide spectrum of variability which one finds in nature. Natural variability is not only the product of mutation and recombination but also of natural selection. Hence when such variability is lost, we lose the fruits of thousands of years of natural selection. For sustaining agricultural advance and for ensuring that we have the capacity to withstand new problems such as new strains of pests which may arise, it is important to conserve our genetic wealth both in wild and domesticated plants and domesticated animals. In the north-eastern Himalayas for example, there are some domesticated animals like Yak and Mithun. They are both work and dairy animals. The great degree of soil damage arising from shifting cultivation is resulting in the endemic flora becoming dominated by plants which are non-edible to animals. This is almost the last step in the battle for plant species' survival. When demographic pressure on land increases, only those plants survive which are non-edible, for the obvious reason that they have a high selection value. In fact, this is why plants like Ipomea carnea and Lantana sp. are alone seen all along the railway lines or on both sides of the road. Edible wild plants do not survive because of uncontrolled grazing by animals. To-day what is happening in the area as under shifting cultivation is that weeds like Eupatorium and Mikania and others take over and yak and Mikania and others take over and yak and Mithun cannot eat them. Hence their stock is now dwindling. Gradually, therefore, for a wide variety of reasons, we find that variability in domesticated plants and semidomesticated animals is tending to get eroded.

.....In 1980, after the new Government was elected, a small group of scientists and others was commissioned to go into the whole question of the adequacy of existing legislative and administrative arrangements for protecting the basic life support systems in India.

By and large, the conclusion of that Committee was that there is a considerable amount of legislative power within the Government, both Central and State. In other

words, there has been a whole series of legislative measures, ending with the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972, which provide extensive legislative power to Government for restricting damage to fragile eco-systems and to natural assets. But, inspite of the existence of these legal provisions, what is actually happening in the field is quite the reverse. The National Forest Policy Resolution of the Government of India of 1952 wanted one-third of the country to be under forests, instead of 22 percent as was the case at that time. According to some of the experts connected with forest survey, the real forest canopy in India may now be hardly 11 to 12 percent. So, instead of reaching a higher level, we have all the time been losing ground. Habitat destruction is the starting point of wildlife destruction. We see this all the time, with the result that even an animal like the elephant has become an endangered species. Elephant killing is going on still inspite of all the legislation and restrictions. It is a very simple phenomenon. For example, in the Assam foothills, every year man makes in roads into the forests. When you cut more forests, than the elephant is forced to come out and it goes to a village. May be a man is killed, or damage takes place to property, and the elephant is named a rogue elephant and destroyed.

Natural habitat destruction in this country, I would say, is the most important cause of concern from the point of view of wildlife preservation. Some of you might have seen a recent book by George Schaller written after many years of travel in the Himalayas. This book, STONES OF SILENCE came out recently. I would quote one particular passage,

"At most a few hundred Kashmir stags, a sub-species of red deer, survive in the Vale of Kashmir, their only home. Yet as recently as 1947 there were over 4,000 the animals having brought to the verge of extinction because no one cared. There are many species similarly threatened, all in need of some one concerned enough to fight for their needs. The fact that a living being can vanish from the earth solely because of man's improvidence and neglect is appalling and the utter finality of it touches the consciousness of a far too few. I have met in the Himalayas many species without a future".

You know this situation only too well because you have all been working in this field.

But I do not agree with Schaller when he says no one is concerned about them. What I generally find is that there is now an awareness everywhere of this problem. Awareness has also led to analysis, like the Species Survival Commission's analysis and the red data book it produces which lists these endangered species, our own Wild Life Protection Act, World Conservation Strategy, Global 2000 report commissioned by the U.S. President and so on.

Analysis, unfortunately, is not followed by action, and that is where the chain is broken, because the normal logical sequence is awareness, analysis and appropriate action. But when we go to the third step, we find that legislative measures alone cannot provide the action forum which is needed. This, I find, is the greatest challenge, particularly to countries like India, which have a totally different set of economic problems than the affluent countries. Each country is in terms of species survival may have its own problems. Here our most important problem is the demographic pressure of man and animal on land and water resources. The other components of the ecodestruction system are (a) careless technology; (b) greed of the rich; and (c) needs of the poor for fuel, fodder and food.

....We have several areas which are being developed as Gene Sanctuaries. The idea behind Gene Sanctuary is to protect an environment in which considerable genetic variability occurs in species of economic value. It could also be in terms of a pathogen. In the case of pathogens, these are called the "Hot spot Screening Location", where considerable variability in the pathogen occurs. For example, there is a famous Hot Spot Location in the Toluca Valley near Mexico City where there is considerable biotype variation in *Phytophthora infestans*, the fungus which was responsible for the Irish potato famine of the last century. Even the Indian potato revolution was facilitated by the opportunity to grow potato material at the hot spot location in Toluca valley for selection for resistance to infection with late blight. It is important, therefore, that we have these hot spot locations, which are the areas where one could select the genetic material and also preserve them. It is of particular importance for the poor countries, which cannot have expensive phytotrons or climate houses, where every environmental parameter can be reproduced artificially.

The north-eastern region is also the home of citrus, *Citrus indica*. Even what is called the Mandarin orange



has its centre of variability in this area. We find there a considerable variability in *Citrus indica* in the Garo Hill region of Meghalaya. This area is now likely to be devastated as a result of the frequency of shifting cultivation becoming shorter and shorter. It has now become almost a five year cycle, while earlier, it used to be 50 to 60 years shifting cultivation cycle. Therefore, a Citrus Gene Sanctuary, the first of its kind in this country, is being developed in the Garo Hills. Garo Hills is also the home of very interesting varieties of wild cotton such as cernum cotton. Sikkim and the north-eastern region is also the area where one finds very primitive races of rice, corn and maize. In fact, the primitive strains of maize found in Sikkim raise the question as to when corn came to India. It was not probably post-Columbus, but was apparently long before, since this kind of primitive maize closely resembles the types found in the excavations in Mexico. The ancestry of tetraploid cotton, *Gossypium hirtum* also suggests that plant exchange between the old and new worlds is one of great antiquity.

....The success of our survival movement will really depend upon our policy to demonstrate that this is a movement not only for tomorrow but that it is a movement which is essentially for today. The movement itself should become a process of wealth creation and employment generation. Some tangible benefits must be seen by the people.

This is why I always say that in poor countries the ecology movement must be based on concepts of economic ecology. In countries which are already well advanced where the quality of life is high, it is a question of protecting the already high standards of living which have been achieved. Here it is a question of providing the basic minimum needs, of calories, of clothing, of shelter. Economic ecology should show the way for accelerated economic advance on a sustainable basis.

Our immediate task must be to stop further damage and the next task, at least in relation to the hill ecosystem, is to restore the damage done, to the extent possible, by the end of this century. In other words, these are the two kinds of tasks. However, the process of denudation is still going on, the process of restoration is yet to begin. If these two tasks, are performed well, then automatically they will take care of the problem of species survival. For this to happen, we need also an understanding among economists and financial experts that ecological economics has an added dimension in the calculation of cost, risk and return, namely, a time dimension extending to infinity. If we are able to bring about in each country a proper blend of ecological economics and economic ecology, we will find that the work of your commission will turn from the present mood of agony into one of enduring ecstasy.

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Ornis Fennica: In Vol. 59 No. 2 & 3: Svein Haftorn writes about the parental care of nestlings by the goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*). Three nests of the species were kept under observation (by means of closed circuit T.V.) to determine the sharing of parental duties with special reference to feeding. The goldcrest is a migrant in the Himalayas, but in its breeding grounds in northern latitudes it has to reckon with very short periods when adequate food is available. Therefore, two broods are hatched, the second, overlapping the first, and one can imagine the coordinated effort that is required for such an exercise. Only the female is involved in incubation and brooding but the male plays an important role in feeding the young and in nest building. Obviously the best time for the male to construct the second nest is when the female is incubating the first clutch of eggs. Once the chicks are out of the eggs the male is over - busy feeding the family. Analysis of the feeding frequencies at the three nests shows that the males share in the feeding increased throughout the entire nesting period from about 4 feeds per hour at the start to about 15 to 18 during the latter part of the nesting period, whereas the females' contribution never exceeded 6 feeds per hour. During a three day period when the female did not feed because she was busy laying the second clutch of eggs, the male compensated by making over 20 feeding trips per hour.

Are there many examples of overlapping nests in India? Perhaps in the polyandrous species like the painted snipe and the blackbreasted quail. But in these cases the female selects a second mate, which is not the case with birds like the goldcrest. There is the case of the Baya, of course where the male has several nests and females at the same time. In a recent talk Prof. MGK. Menon said that the reason why India had not produced any Noble Laurettes was because they did not have access to the sophisticated scientific laboratories of the West. I was reminded of this when reading about the closed circuit T.V. used for studying the movements of the goldcrest. If birdwatchers in India had these facilities they may uncover several mysteries of our bird life.

(Anyone interested in this article in Ornis Fennica will be sent a copy for the cost of xeroxing)-Zafar Futehally.

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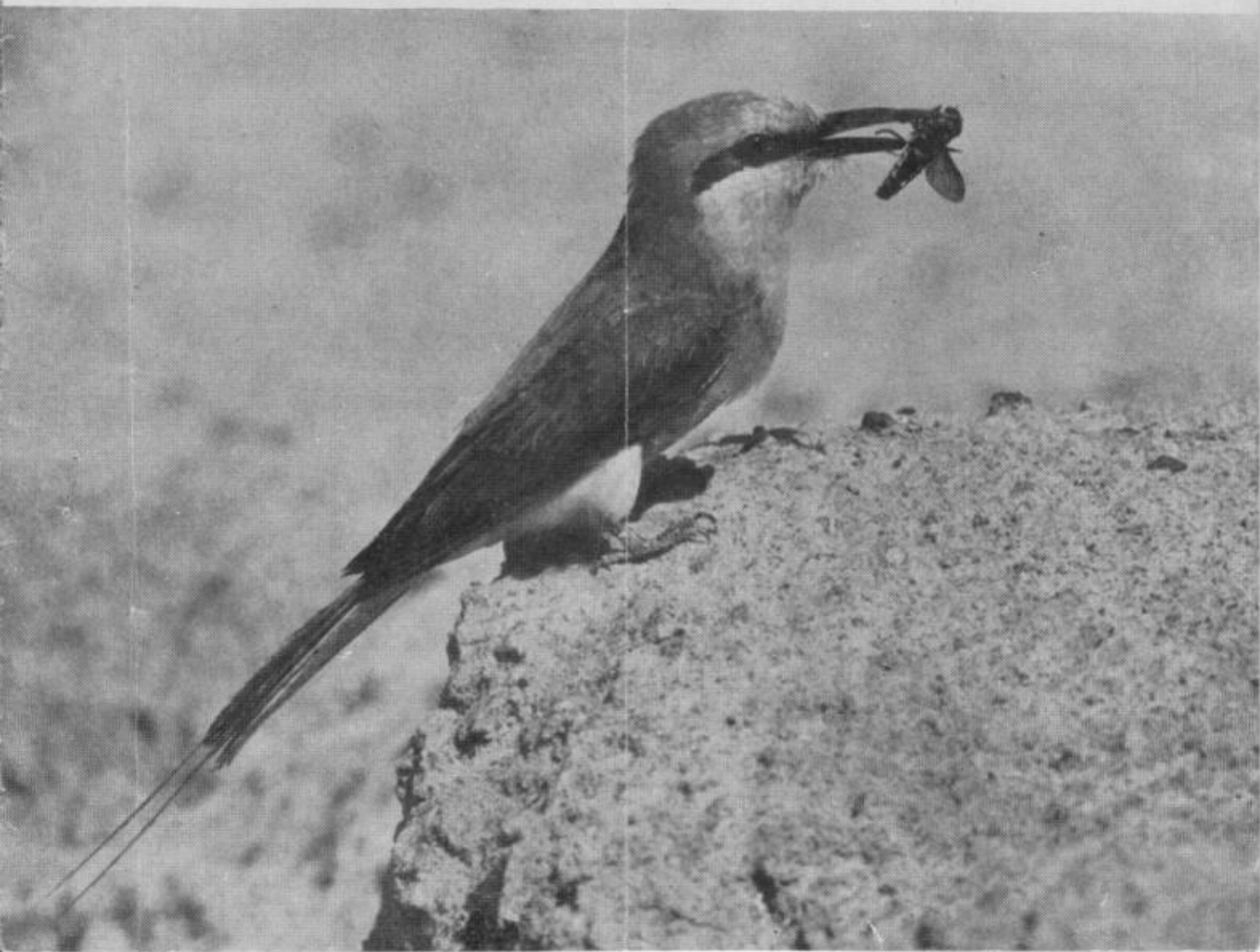
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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

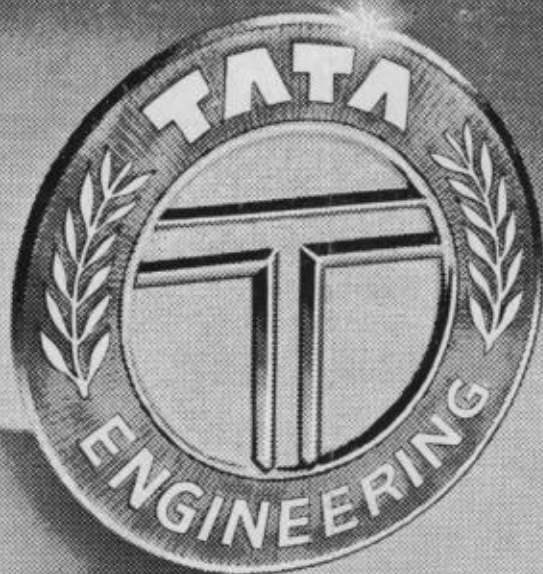
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FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

Vol.XXIII

No. 5 and 6

May-June, 1983

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### Editorial

A visit to Kihim: After many years we spent the month of May in Kihim. We motored down from Bangalore and were relieved to find that the massive Thal Fertilizer Project, just a couple of miles away had not yet caused much damage to the environs of this seaside village. However, the unfortunate creation of the housing colony for the Project, within a mile of Kihim village has created its pressures on this rural area. The village tank which was declared a sanctuary some years ago by the Forest Department is much less picturesque than it used to be. The Lotus flowers which covered a large part of the water are now few and far between. Surprisingly, the Bronze winged jacana was present; but during one morning we managed to see only a small king fisher, a pond heron and a middle egret. The dabchicks and coots which were such a feature of the tank were nowhere to be seen. Some distance away in the fields we saw crested larks, golden backed wood-peckers, house sparrows, fantail warblers and purple-rumped sunbirds.

The housing colony which is not far from the tank has a great disservice to the locality by planting eucalyptus in their compound. Hitherto no eucalyptus trees were planted and the vegetation of Kihim consisted mainly of local trees like Karanj, ber, peepal, sandal, neem, coconut, drumsticks, mango, tamarind, bhend, bar and several more. The only prominent exotic were casuarinas which seem to have adapted themselves so well to Indian conditions that they can now be considered to be a part of our landscape.

Incidentally, I checked on the water levels in about 20 wells in Kihim and found that all of them retained the levels of previous decades. Obviously, the thick vegetation of Kihim helps the rain to percolate into the ground, and there is little run-off. Though the population has increased very much during the last two decades, the local wells keep supplying adequate water for drinking and other domestic needs.

One of my favourite birds in Kihim is the white-throated ground-thrush which sings so beautifully at the commencement of the breeding season in May. This year I was only able to hear the bird. Its ventriloquistic qualities make it very difficult to trace the source of the sound. I was glad to see that the pair of white



bellied sea eagles which have been here for generations were present. Whether in flight or in the sitting posture these birds present a magnificent appearance. We heard the rather disturbing calls of the brown wood owl several times, and one bird was unfortunately found electrocuted on the transmission line.

Apart from the joy of watching birds in Kihim again, I was delighted to see some notes by Salim Ali in the Akhbar Book of the house, and I am reproducing these below:

'Arrived 6th November, leaving 9th November 1954. A single Desert Chat (*Oenanthe deserti*) seen yesterday evening feeling lost and forlorn in unaccustomed and unusual surroundings - flying along the beach. Had never been seen in this neighbourhood before.

A pair of Honey Buzzards has been nesting between Yali and Retreat for the last 12 years to my knowledge - but never more than one pair. On 10th May a 14 day old chick from this years nest in 'Retreat' compound was ringed. If it grows up, it may furnish some clue as regards the nesting pair next year. Does the same pair nest here year after year? Is its place taken in part or wholly by the local born youngsters? Do altogether new birds occupy the place, and what happens to the yearly progeny? The same problem needs to be solved re the 'Yali' pair of white bellied sea eagles. Raja, the emeritus Yali mali, tells me that he has seen this pair nesting every year in the same place since he was a boy over 50 years ago - Never has he seen more than this one pair about; never have they succeeded in raising a family! Let the credit rest with the relator as Babur would have said, but the matter is not without strangeness and certainly worthy of investigation. This season (i.e., Dec. 1942) the eagles had shifted to a casurina in the S.W. corner of Shahindas land. There were two eggs in the nest - about 100' up - which vanished after a week or so - rather unaccountably. Thereafter, the birds lost interest in the nest, but they are still in the same neighbourhood. The desertion by the eagles of their age long nest site - the bee hive casurina, above the well, north of Yali bungalow - was undoubtedly due to the large influx of white-backed vultures that suddenly took a fancy to the Yali compound, and cluttered up all the fine casurinas with their large and filthy nests.

The ire of the squire was justly aroused. He loaded his gun and slew a dozen, which sent the rest a packing. It is hoped that the sea eagles will now return. All this is getting too long, so here are a few items in brief.

2 flocks flamingoes (50 and 26) flying N - 23 April.

2 pairs green bee\_eaters and 1 white\_breasted kingfisher nesting in Al Murad compound.

1 fulvous fruit bat (*Rousettus leschenaulti*) ringed by me in April (43) in an old cave in Elephanta Islands was found struggling with black ants by Shamoon (Abdulali) in Yali compound on 13th May. Believe it or not.

Pitta, Blue\_checked (or Blue tailed) bee\_eaters appeared overnight, 24th and 19th May respectively, after rainy and stormy nights.

The last blyths reed\_warbler at Bhombar 25th May

1 pair quaker babblers - for 1st time ever near 'Latifia' 12-19 May.

Arrived: 23 April  
Dep : 28 May

Sd/\_ Salim Ali  
27th May 43

Illustrated guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent:  
As many readers may know, the Bombay Natural History Society will be celebrating the completion of the first 100 years of its existence in September 1983. To mark the occasion, the Society has planned to bring out a number of special natural history publications. One of these which should be of special interest to bird watchers is the Illustrated guide to the Birds of the Indian subcontinent. Illustrations by John Henry Dick, the famous American bird artist, text by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. The 106 plates -- 73 colour, and 33 black\_ and\_ white -- illustrate every single species of bird found in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. The brief captions given information on the size, status, habitat and distribution of each species, making the volume a comprehensive and handy field guide. The book will be priced at the low figure of Rs.120/- (Rs.100/- for members of BNHS) so that it may keep within the range of a majority of interested people. Copies can be had from Bombay Natural History Society after 15 September 1983.

Some special features of the visual apparatus and vision in birds - a review by Hamida Saiduzzafar: The visual apparatus of birds is extremely versatile, with several special adaptations consistent with the particular requirements of the individual species.

This enables birds to see at long as well as short distances, with rapid changes of focus - on land, in air and under water (both fresh - and salt-water.)

Thus the vision of birds is unique amongst vertebrates, and is truly astonishing. Here are the details:

1. Shape of the eye: The eyes of the birds are generally flatter, more conical and hypermetropic (long-sighted), than in humans. Exception: The Kiwi, which is myopic (short-sighted).
2. Size and mobility: The eye balls and their bony orbits are usually large in proportion to the size of the head, and the eyes are deep-set; hence they seem smaller than they actually are. For the same reason, eye movements are almost negligible, and are compensated for by the extra-ordinary mobility of the neck (and in some species by the presence of two foveae - vide infra). Thus, some birds twist their necks around to allow them to sleep with their heads under their wings (e.g., swans, flamingoes).
3. Eyelids: In birds, the lids cover almost the entire eyeball, leaving only the small cornea exposed. Unlike in humans, the lower eyelid is the more active one, and moves upwards when the eye is closed; it also contains the lacrimal gland which secretes the watery tear-film. Birds additionally possess a nictitating membrane (third eyelid) which is supplied by a powerful muscle (the pyrimidalis) which allows the nictitating membrane to flick across the cornea like a high-speed camera shutter. It also has a special gland under it, so that a thick oily fluid can be smeared for protection across the cornea at regular intervals. When the nictating membrane is fully stretched across the cornea it is almost transparent in the centre, so that it does not interfere unduly with the vision of the bird. Thus, the particular functions of this membrane are protective at high altitudes as in migration, and under water (e.g. Kingfishers, darters) where it acts like diver's spectacles.



4. Accommodation: Most species of birds possess a remarkable power of accommodation (change of focus of the eye) due to an extra strong ciliary muscle, and special modifications of the crystalline lens. This enables birds (especially birds of prey) to see an object on the ground from distance of upto half\_a\_mile and keep it in focus while they swoop down to life it up in their talons. By comparison, the human capacity for accommodation is pathetically inefficient!

5. Retina and vision: The basic layers of the retina in birds - are similar to those in the human eye. However, certain additional features require mention:

a) Oil\_droplets: There are oil\_droplets found in the outer segments of the rods and cones (retinal receptors), chiefly the latter. These oil\_droplets are also found in the eyes of reptiles and certain other animal species, but not in humans.

In birds with day\_vision (diurnal) they vary in colour from red to orange, yellow, green or (rarely) blue, while in nocturnal birds the oil\_droplets are scarce and either yellow or colourless.

The function of oil\_droplets appears to be to modify colour vision, increase contrast between an object and its background (e.g. a green caterpillar on a green leaf) and reduce chromatic aberration as well as glare.

b) The pecten: This is a velvety\_black mass seen with the ophthalmoscope in the posterior part of the eye. It is heavily pigmented, especially at its apex; in some species it is pleated, and the folds are held together like an accordion by a band of pigmented tissue called the 'apical bridge'.

The pecten (unlike the retina of birds) is richly supplied with blood vessels, so its function is chiefly nutritive.

It probably does not interfere with vision because it is situated directly in front of the optic nerve\_head (the blind\_spot in the visual field).

c) The fovea: (yellow\_spot): As in the human eye, this is the area of the most accurate vision, and is generously provided with retinal cones. Most species

of birds with laterally-placed eyes have only one fovea (as in humans), but many possess two. These are said to be bi\_foveate wherein the central fovea is used for uni\_ocular panoramic (side) vision, while the more posteriorly placed (temporal) fovea is used for straight\_ahead, binocular vision.

Birds with more centrally placed eyes and largely nocturnal vision (such as owls) have only one fovea and are said to be mono\_foveate.

---

Snippets in distress by R.Kannan, 33 Saravana street, T.Nagar, Madras 600017: On the evening of 30th January 1983, I noticed a slum dweller sitting still and huddled in the mudflats of Adyar estuary. Curious, I watched him through my binoculars and realised much to my dismay, that he was a bird trapper. The oval wire basket with him was crammed with dozens of curlew and marsh sand\_pipers, and numerous sand plovers. On closer examination, I was shocked to discover that the man, for no apparent reason, had introduced fuse wires through the eyes of all the precious long distant migrants. They were all fully alive but hopelessly blind. Their heads were a gruesome halo of blood and dirt, their beaks were twisted and most of them had damaged wings. The culprit sensing danger, took to his heels after 'releasing' the doomed birds, which were eventually mauled by crows. Nearly a hundred waders were massacred that evening.

All around Madras, especially down the Southern coast and the marshes parallel to it, hundreds (or possibly thousands) of waders are trapped every week during the peak season. Our enquires reveal that poachers operate all along the 40 km. strip of wetland between South Madras and Mahabalipuram. So callous are the poachers that they seem to be least aware that they are involved in something clandestine. In fact, the birds are openly sold in markets and even taken about the streets alive in bicycles.

If such is the onslaught that the migrants have to endure in Madras, it is conceivable that the situation might be more drastic in rural areas along our coasts. In September 1981 we ran into a party of village kids in a hamlet near Pulicat bird sanctuary, each proudly displaying stints, sandpipers or plovers. No one

knows upto what extent trapping is done in many of the less known estuaries of the east coast such as Kovalam, Cuddalore, Porto Novo etc.

Waders, or 'Snippets' as they are popularly called, constitute a cheap and important source of protein to most of our poor people. In places where trapping is limited there is of course, no cause for concern. But in areas where the business seems to be reckless (as in Madras) it is bound to severely affect the wintering populations. I appeal to all readers residing in such places to send a flurry of letters to the authorities concerned, imploring them to restrict the exploitation. This I hope, would go a long way to ensure the safety of the immigrants in the forthcoming seasons.

---

Southern grey partridge ( *Francolinus pondicerianus* (Gmelin) in Malabar, Kerala by N.J. George; Department of Zoology, University of Calicut 673 635: On the morning (11.30 am) of April 1981, on my way back to the Department from a local collection trip, I saw a pair of Southern grey partridge *Francolinus pondicerianus* feeding in the University Park area. When I followed them with the gun, the birds ran faster and faster and finally flew to the large adjoining open dry area with sparse growth of 'dry' grass. Since then I used to see this bird (single pair) during the hot months of March, April and May of 1982 and 1983. This year (1983), on 26th April evening at 5.45 pm I could also hear the calls of this bird and could locate them again in the University park.

This note is prompted on the basis of the fact that Dr. Salim Ali has included this bird in 'The Birds of Kerala' specifically saying that the bird is resident, not common and found in small numbers in dry, open scrub country and cultivation in the southern districts - apparently also in the drier parts of Malabar district.

I think that the sighting of this bird in the campus of University of Calicut, Thenjipalam, Malappuram district, may be worth reporting in order to confirm the occurrence of this bird in the drier parts of Malabar.

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Notes on breeding of Western yelloweyed babbler (Chrysomma sinense hypocolium (Franklin)) in Jammu District. By Rathin Mukherjee, High Altitude Zoology Field Station, Zoological Survey of India, Solan (H.P.): The Western yelloweyed babbler, Chrysomma sinense hypocolium (Franklin) resident and locally common bird, is distributed in Pakistan and Northwest India. It is a little smaller than the bulbul and can be distinguished by its rich rufous brown upper plumage, half cocked up tail and a very conspicuous orange yellow ring round the eye.

Unlike babblers it does not babble but has a long liquid whistling song in the breeding season. The normal call is a somewhat plaintive Cheep cheep.

On account of its skulking habit in bushes and thickets and under growth it is rather difficult to find its nest unless one is familiar with the loud proclaiming call of the male, which is a pointer to its vicinity. However we were able to locate an exposed nest of this bird at Samba near a seasonal pond. It was placed 0.50 cm. above the ground between the fork of a monsoon plant. One bird was sitting in the nest (The nest was later measured 7.5 cm in diameter and 10 cm deep). The bird had to compress itself inside the cup shaped nest and only its head was visible from a distance. On approaching close the bird flew away uttering a sharp Cheep cheep, on a nearby Ipomea bush. A look at the nest made it clear why the bird was annoyed. The nest had two altricial young ones. Their eyes were closed and the feathers had not appeared. The nest in this condition was observed on 30th September which makes it apparent that the breeding season of the western yelloweyed babbler extends well beyond September.

Later the bird was observed from a concealed place. After seeing no threatening objects around, the parent bird returned with an insect, apparently of Ipomea bushes. The food was placed in the beak of young ones. Later on faecal matter of the young was carried away in its beak. During the course of our observation for 3 hours (7 am to 10 am) only one bird (sex ?) was seen to perform domestic duties. After feeding the young and cleaning the nest the parent bird covered the juveniles again.

Thompson (1964) has given a logical explanation among birds in his 'A new dictionary of birds'. The

hatching bird has only a limited power of regulating its body temperature. In extreme idicolous birds the requisits mechanism is very slow in developing and covering by adult as well as insulating properties of the nest give important help during the early days. Only if the nest be kept extremely clean can it provide the necessary thermal insulation and thus make warming by the parents effective. The behaviour of the western yelloweyed babbler when seen in the above perspective makes clear the cause of its promptness in nest sanitation in the colder season of late September.

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Egg laying in captivity of a large Indian parakeet by Arvind Gupte, Pratap Nagar, Pasulia, Hoshangabad 461001, (M.P.): A person from Jabalpur had a caged female large Indian parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*) which used to lay 4 eggs every winter in its cage. Prior to egg-laying there used to be no noticable change in the behaviour of the bird (no sign of restlessness or nesting urge). After laying the eggs the bird totally neglected them and made no effort to incubate them. The owner used to remove the eggs. Once he tried to get them incubated by a hen but nothing happened. This was only to be expected in view of the fact that the bird had no chance to mate with a male. The parakeet died about two years back at the ripe age of 20 years.

Reproduction is a miraculous process involving a number of interlocking mechanisms. Avain eggs do mature in the ovaries under the influence of hormones but egg-laying normally requires the stimulus of mating. This is why birds in captivity do not often lay eggs. Do readers know about any similar case?.

---

### Correspondence

Letter from World Working Group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills by Charles S. Luthin, Director, Vogelpark Walsrode 303 Walsrode Am Rieselbach, West Germany:

I would like to introduce to you a new and growing organization, the World Working Group on Storks, Ibises, and Spoonbills (WWG-SIS), a specialist group of the International Council for Bird Preservation. The Working Group has been established to focus attention on these poorly known, and in some cases threatened or endangered, bird species.

A need has existed for some time to promote further research and conservation activities for these ciconiiforms, and to coordinate the exchange of information among those interested in these species. The Working Group is an effort to fill these needs.

Under former Chairman, Dr. Gunter Wennrich, the initial activities of the Group focused on locating and contacting key individuals around the world who are presently working with these species, and to gather information on the status of all species covered under the Group.

Now that preliminary queries and investigations have been completed, we can begin to develop a sound structure to our Working Group, to initiate an active campaign to learn further about unknown species, and to develop good communication among scientists and conservationists. Continuously we shall solicit from our members recommendations for priority projects, and then take the necessary steps towards implementing these projects.

The WWG\_SIS is presently involved in developing a species monitoring program in Latin America, has proposed research on the rare and little-known Madagascar crested ibis, and will initiate in 1983 a preliminary survey of Southeast Asian stork, ibis, and spoonbill species. Beginning in 1983, a newsletter will be issued to members to share investigation results and important information on these species.

The enclosed materials further describe the structure and goals of the WWG\_SIS. Included also is membership information, and a form to complete to show your interest in joining the Working Group. I encourage you to photocopy the species\_status form, and fill it in for each species you are familiar with in your area.

We have already located a number of interested and enthusiastic individuals willing to assist with Working Group activities, and we are seeking others to join our coalition. We are particularly eager to find individuals who are presently involved in research or conservation of these birds, and who would agree to become working members; after all, a working group doesn't exist without participating members!

I hope you are interested in joining the Working Group on Storks, Ibises, and Spoonbills, and I look forward to hearing from you. The birds thank you.

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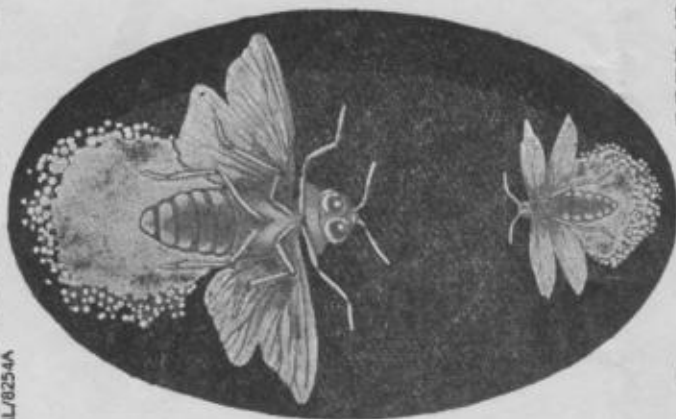
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yet each day is a dream nearer



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## ನೂತನ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ನೂರು ದಿನಸ: ದೃಢನಿಲವು — ದಿಟ್ಟ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ

ಜನತೆ ನನಗುತ್ತಿರುವ ಆದೇಶ, ಅಧಿಕಾರಗಳ ನಿಜವಾದ ಅರ್ಥ — ಈವರೆಗೆ ನೀಡಿದ ಆಶ್ವಾಸನೆಗಳ ಈಡೇರಿಕೆ.

ಈ ನೂರು ದಿನಗಳ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮೂಲಭೂತ ಸ್ವರೂಪದ ಪ್ರಗತಿಪರ ನಿರ್ಧಾರಗಳನ್ನು ಕೈಗೊಂಡು ಜನತೆಗಿತ್ತು ಪಾಲನೆಗೆ ನೂತನ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಪಣತೊಟ್ಟಿದೆ. ಜನತೆಯ ಅಶೋತ್ತರಗಳ ಸಾಧನೆಯ ಗುರಿಯುಳ್ಳ ನಿಮ್ಮ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಮಹತ್ವ ಪೂರ್ಣ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ ಇಟ್ಟಿದೆ.

ಆಡಳಿತಾಧಿಕಾರದ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣಕ್ಕೆ ಬದ್ಧವಾದ ನೂತನ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಎಲ್ಲ ನಗರ ಕಾರ್ಪೊರೇಶನ್‌ಗಳು, ಪುರಸಭೆಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಚುನಾವಣೆ ನಡೆಸಲಿದೆ.

ಹರಿಜನ, ಗಿರಿಜನ ಹಾಗೂ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಶ್ರಿಯೇಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಅದ್ಯಕ್ಷತೆಯ — ಅವರ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ 'ಎಳೆಗೆಗಾಗಿ' ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತವಾದ ನಿರ್ದಿಷ್ಟ ಸಲಹೆಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರ, ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಆಯೋಗ ಮತ್ತು ಅಲ್ಪಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಆಯೋಗವನ್ನು ರಚಿಸಿದೆ.

ಹರಿಜನ—ಗಿರಿಜನ ಯುವಜನಾಂಗದ ಪ್ರತಿಭಾಪುಗಸ್ಕಾರಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಪ್ರಾಯಶಃ ದೇಶದಲ್ಲೇ ಪ್ರಥಮವಾದ ವಿನೂತನ ಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಅದರಂತೆ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾನಿಲಯಗಳಿಂದ, ವಿವಿಧ ವಿಷಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪದವಿ ಪಡೆದ 87 ಪ್ರತಿಭಾವಂತ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿವರ್ಷ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ ವರ್ಗಕ್ಕೆ ನೇರವಾಗಿ ನೇಮಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗುವುದು.

'ಅಂತೋದಯ'—ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಪ್ರತಿ ಹಳ್ಳಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಐದು ಕಡುಬಡಕುಟುಂಬಗಳನ್ನು ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡಿ, ಅವರಿಗೆ ಸ್ವಾವಲಂಬಿಗಳಾಗಲು ಎಲ್ಲ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಒದಗಿಸಿ, ಬಡತನದ ರೇಖೆಯಿಂದ ಮೇಲೆತ್ತುವ ಕ್ಷೇಮಾಭ್ಯುದಯ ಯೋಜನೆ.

ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ವೇತನದ ಪರಿಷ್ಕರಣೆ.

ಕೃಷಿ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರು, ಹೋಟೆಲು, ಸಿನಿಮಾ ಹಾಗೂ ಬೀಡಿ ಕೆಲಸಗಾರರು ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ಎಲ್ಲ ಉದ್ಯಮಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಅನುಕೂಲ.

ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರಿಗೆಲ್ಲ ಮೇ ತಿಂಗಳ ಒಂದನೇ ತಾರೀಖು ಸಂಬಳ ಸಹಿತ ರಜೆ.

ಬಹು ದಿನಗಳ ಬೇಡಿಕೆ ವೃತ್ತಿ ತೆರಿಗೆಯ ರದ್ದು. ತಿಂಗಳಿಗೆ 1200 ರೂಪಾಯಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ವೇತನ ಪಡೆಯುವವರು ಮತ್ತು ವರ್ಷಕ್ಕೆ ನಲವತ್ತು ಸಾವಿರ ರೂಪಾಯಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ವಹಿವಾಟು ಮಾಡುವ ವ್ಯಾಪಾರಸ್ಥರು ಇನ್ನು ಮುಂದೆ ವೃತ್ತಿ ತೆರಿಗೆ ಕೊಡಬೇಕಾಗಿಲ್ಲ.

ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ತಡೆಯಲು ಪರಿಣಾಮಕಾರಿ ಕ್ರಮ. ನ್ಯಾಯಬೆಲೆ ಅಂಗಡಿಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾರಾಟ ಮಾಡುವ ಎಲ್ಲ ದರ್ಜೆಯ ಆಕ್ಕಿಯ ಬೆಲೆಯನ್ನು ಗಣನೀಯವಾಗಿ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಮಾಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ರೈತರ ಮುಂದಿರುವ ಹಲವಾರು ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳ ನಿವಾರಣೆಯ ಮೊದಲ ಹಂತವಾಗಿ, ವಿವಿಧ ರೀತಿಯ ಸಾಲ ಮರುಪಾವತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸುಮಾರು ಮುನತ್ತಾರು ಕೋಟಿ ರೂಪಾಯಿ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಕೊಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಸರ್ಕಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಸಂದಾಯವಾಗದೆ ಉಳಿದಿರುವ ಸಾಲಗಳ ಮನ್ನ. ಭೂಸಾರ ರಕ್ಷಣೆ ಮತ್ತು ಒಡ್ಡು ನಿರ್ಮಾಣದ ಬಾಕಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅರ್ಧಭಾಗವನ್ನು ನಿಯಮಿತ ಅವಧಿಯ ಒಳಗೆ ತೀರಿಸಿದರೆ, ಉಳಿದರ್ಧ ಮನ್ನಾ. ಜೊತೆಗೆ ಸಹಕಾರಿ ಸಾಲಗಳ ಮರುಪಾವತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿ.

ರಾಜಕೀಯದಲ್ಲಿ ನೀತಿಯುತ ನಡವಳಿಕೆಯ ಸತ್ಪ್ರದಾಯಕ್ಕೆ ಮೊದಲ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ. ಸಕ್ಷಾಂತರದ ಪಿಡುಗನ್ನು ತೆಗೆದುಹಾಕುವುದು. ಸಕ್ಷಾಂತರ ನಿಷೇಧಿಸುವ ವಿಧೇಯಕವನ್ನು ತಂದಿರುವ, ದೇಶದಲ್ಲೇ ಎರಡನೆಯ ರಾಜ್ಯ — ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ.

ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಚಾರದ ಮೂಲೋತ್ಪಾಟನೆಗೆ ತೀವ್ರಕ್ರಮ — ಲೋಕ ಆಯುಕ್ತದ ರಚನೆ.

ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಕುಶಲಕರ್ಮಗಳ ಉಪಯೋಗಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಸಾಧನ, ಸಲಕರಣೆಗಳನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸುವ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರಗಳನ್ನು ರಾಜ್ಯದ ವಿವಿಧ ಕಡೆ ಸ್ಥಾಪಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.

ವೃದ್ಧಾಪ್ಯವೇತನ ಹಾಗೂ ಅಂಗವಿಕಲರಿಗೆ ಕೊಡುವ ಮಾಸಾಶನವನ್ನು ಐವತ್ತು ರೂಪಾಯಿಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಜನತೆಯ ಕುಂದು ಕೊರತೆಗಳನ್ನು ವಿಚಾರಿಸಲು ಹೊಸ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನೇ ರೂಪಿಸಿದೆ. ಅದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಮಂತ್ರಿ ಶಾಖೆಯನ್ನು ರಚಿಸಿದೆ.

ಕನ್ನಡವನ್ನು ಎಲ್ಲ ಮಟ್ಟದಲ್ಲೂ ಆಡಳಿತ ಭಾಷೆಯಾಗಿ ಮಾಡಿರುವುದು ಮಾತ್ರವಲ್ಲ, ಇದು ಕಳೆದ ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ 15ರಿಂದ ಕಡ್ಡಾಯವಾಗಿ, ಯಶಸ್ವಿಯಾಗಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಗತವಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ಪ್ರಪ್ರಥಮ ಜನತಾ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ರಚಿಸಿ ಇತಿಹಾಸದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊಸ ಅಧ್ಯಾಯ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಿಸಿದೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದಲ್ಲಿ ಇಡೀ ಸಮಾಜದ ಅಭ್ಯುದಯ ಅದರಲ್ಲೂ, ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಜನರ ದಲಿತ ವರ್ಗದವರ ಏಳಿಗೆ ಸಾಧನೆಯೇ ನಮ್ಮ ಧೃಢ ಸಂಕಲ್ಪ.

**ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ:— ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ**

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*Cover Picture : Common Green Bee - Eater — Courtesy E. HANUMANTHA RAO*

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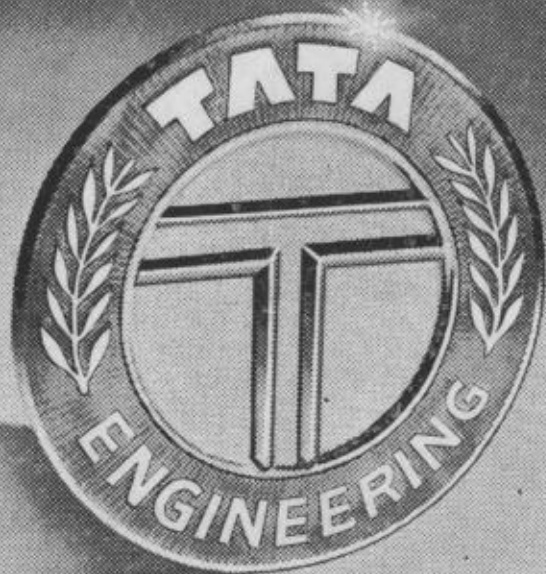
# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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NEWSLETTER  
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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## Editorial

Finances: The number of subscribers remain low at 150 and it would help if more can be enrolled. All the former subscribers who have not renewed their subscriptions are being reminded. Several are just 'forgetful' as was the case with Jagjivan Ram when he failed to file his income tax returns. There is of course little point in bullying people to pay up. If they are not genuinely interested let them retire. If any subscribers wish to have extra copies to send to prospective members, I will be glad to supply them.

Meanwhile I am glad that advertisement support continues and I am now in a position to make a modest payment of Rs.25/- per article. I know that some of you may object to this token payment on the ground that it is inadequate; and also that the Newsletter should build up its financial defences before going on the rocks again. I would welcome comments, but will act as I deem appropriate taking the general situation into account.

## Check Lists

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I continue to receive check lists of birds from various areas and these are undoubtedly valuable, but I am considering what is the best way to use them. Apart from taking up too much space, bare lists, without comment on the status or activity or any interesting aspect of the avians concerned, does not make pleasant reading. Perhaps I should report on their availability and send them on to individuals on request. I have at the moment check lists of:

Kaziranga and Manas Sanctuaries, IIT, Bombay  
The Birds of Haryana: J.S. Yadav and R.P. Maleyuar  
Birds of Gir Forest: WWF Saurashtra  
Birds of Motisari-Jason area: WWF Saurashtra  
Punjab and Chandigarh: M.S. Dhindra, Punjab  
Agricultural University,  
Ludhiana

What shall we study: I asked Salim Ali recently about projects which birdwatchers, with ordinary abilities and a limited amount of time, can pursue. He said there was great need to have information about the changes which take place in a bird population when a stretch of natural forest is converted into monoculture. He said that though it seemed logical to assume that a mixed forest would have more species than in say a pure

eucalyptus or teak stand, no definite data was available. If our reorders have the opportunity of monitoring over a period of a year or two, the bird population of a monoculture tract, some useful data could be collected.

The general belief that eucalyptus prevents the growth of grass and shrubs and so is responsible for the denudation of small forms of life which are essential for the ecosystem is not true for all species of eucalyptus. During a survey of the Western Ghats region Rev.F.C.Saldanha pointed out areas under eucalyptus which contained excellent ground cover. With regard to the fear that eucalyptus was responsible for draining away our underground water resources, because of heavy transpiration, a research station at Ootacamund opines that the roots of this exotic tree never go down deep enough to top the water table level after the monsoon. Obviously there is need for further careful study on this important issue.

Birding in July: I suppose middle July must be one of the worst months for birdwatching in most places of India as none of the migrants, long distance, or indigenous are around. Yesterdays round (26.7.83) over a three mile radius produced a miserable list: Black drongo, common myna, tree pie, paddyfield warbler?, blackbellied finch lark, grey partridge, rose-ringed parakeet, white breasted kingfisher, pied bushchat, common iora, jungle crow, blue jay, spotted dove, whiteheaded babbler, large pied wagtail, tailor birds, pariah kite.

### Abstracts

From the Annual Report 1982 of the International Council for Bird Preservation - Preface by Russell Peterson, New President: One of the most illuminating discussions at the World Conference was centred on the disparity in various parts of the world between the proportion of endangered birds to organisations looking after them. Most of the highly developed countries have few endangered species and many organisations with large memberships. The countries with the greatest number of birds in the Red Data Book, however, often have the fewest ornithologists, conservationists, or informed citizens. In this context, it is encouraging to read in the Bulletin of how ICBP National Sections are being strengthened



and to see how many new Representatives, in countries lacking a Section, we have added in the last year.

From Foreword by Christoph Imboden: Birds demonstrate better than anything else that conservation cannot be confined to national boundaries. Our members in Europe and North America should feel as much concern and responsibility for the conservation needs in Africa and South America as they do over events in their own regions. A growing number of our large member organisations in the developed countries recognise that it makes little sense spending a lot of money for the preservation of a bird's breeding habitat while events in other countries may threaten the existence of the species's wintering area, where it spends half or more of its lifetime.

From Species Survival Commission Newsletter, June 1983:  
International Crane Workshop in India: Dr. George Archibald, Chairman of the Crane Specialist Group, reports on the International Crane Workshop at Bharatpur, in India, in February:

'While 38 Siberian Cranes probed Ghana for their sedge tubers in the jheels of Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary, Bharatpur, India, 187 delegates from 24 nations attending the International Crane Workshop gathered at the same park from February 7-11 for discussions about a family of birds that includes seven endangered species. The workshop provided a unique and historic opportunity for researchers from the USSR, China, Iran, USA, Pakistan, India, Bhutan and a host of other nations to develop co-operative international programs. 'Researchers from India, China and Bhutan reported that perhaps fewer than 500 black-necked cranes Grus nigricollis survive on the Tibetan Plateau, while the majestic red-crowned cranes of temperate east Asia are reduced to fewer than 1000 individuals nesting in the USSR, China and Japan. Only seven Siberian cranes were counted on the marshes of the Caspian lowlands in Iran, while the India flock has increased by two birds from the 36 that were counted at Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary, the previous winter. Encouraging news came from China, where 230 Siberians were found wintering on the marshes of Lake Poyang, an increase of 90 birds from the 1981-82 count, which was obviously incomplete. The North American whooping crane numbers only 71 birds in the traditional flock, with perhaps 15 more in the experimental group in the Rocky Mountain Valleys of Idaho, Colorado and New Mexico. The white-naped cranes are fewer than 2000

the hooded cranes fewer than 6000, and the wattled cranes of Africa are under 7000. A catastrophic decline in the numbers of West African crowned cranes was reported in response to the increase in human numbers and the widespread use of pesticides. With the exception of the black-necked crane, the other endangered cranes are well established and breeding in captivity.

'The workshop was co-hosted by the state of Rajasthan, WWF-India, ICBP, International Crane Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bombay Natural History Society and the Zoological Survey of India. The delegates agreed that the fellowship, the birding and the plans for future co-operation were all most inspiring, to the point that the crane people plan to flock again in 1987, perhaps at the Zha Long Nature Reserve in China'.

From the International Council for Bird Preservation Newsletter: Xth Asian Continental Section Conference:  
The Asian Continental Section will hold its Xth Conference in Sri Lanka from 17-20 April 1984.

Those interested in participating should contact the Chairman of the ICBP National Section in Sri Lanka, Mr. T. W. Hoffmann, PO Box 11, Colombo, Sri Lanka, or Mr. Tatsuo Suyama, Executive Vice-Chairman, ICBP-Japan, 12-6-202 Sakuragaokamachi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan.

Space will be limited, so early application is recommended. Priority will be given to those already officially connected with existing ICBP sections, and to countries in the region where it is hoped to forge new contacts.

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Birding in Pune by Taej Mundkur. 124/9 Erandavana, Poona 411004: Being a fairly inconsistent writer, my notes on bird activities have been scattered all over the place. I have now finally collected, sorted and filed all my scribbles and put on paper a few interesting observations. I have put them down data wise, the place of observation and finally the matter.

3.5.81      Sinhad / A group of five crested serpent eagles were seen riding the wind together.

Down in the ravine, a strange looking bird flew above our heads and landed in a tree just ahead of us. Running forward, we got a grand view of the bird with its crest erect in the breeze. It was the size of a Shikra (+) with a dark, heavily streaked breast and prominent mesial stripe. Later, we identified it as the crested goshawk (Accipiter trivirgatus), which according to Mr. Abdulali, is seen only in the Deccan, in Maharashtra. This is the first sighting in Pune.

- 2.9.81 Telco Lake - This pretty area has a number of Chestnut Bitterns (Ixobrychus cinnamomeus), resident spotbill ducks (Anas poecilorhyncha) and most of the other lake birds. On this day, we watched an unusual bittern that stumped all of us. Checking the Handbook, it turned out to be the female of a Yellow Bittern (Ixobrychus sinensis) an addition to Pune's birds.
- 3.11.81 Pashan Lake - Besides the usual migratory visitors and residents, we were lucky to watch a pair of Red Headed Merlins (Falco chichuera) hunting at around fifty feet in front of us. The birds were interested in something in the tall reeds that line the lake. They sort of hovered and then dived one after the other and the first made off with a small bird gripped in its talons. Later, we saw them finish off their prey on a high tension pole. After which, they harried a female marsh harrier (Circus aeruginosus).
- 4.11.81 N.D.A. Road - Late afternoon, as we were going along the path, we saw a bird dive and land on a tree on the hill. So we started climbing, but the going was slow as the bird was very wary of us and we didn't want to alarm it. The first thing that struck us was the white supercilium and light grey body. It then flew off and its checkered wings, horizontal stripes on the breast and four incomplete tail bands were clearly seen. It was an (Accipiter gentilis), the goshawk. This bird does not appear in Mr. Abdulali's 'Checklist of the Birds of Maharashtra'. The Handbook gives this bird, the status of a rare winter visitor to North India and Gujarat. The bird was then seen once again on the same road and once in the Aundh area.



- 14.1.82 Pashan Lake - A spotted eagle has been seen on a number of occasions by a number of birdwatchers, but I am not too sure as to whether it is the lesser spotted eagle (Aquila pomarina hastata) or the greater spotted eagle (Aquila clanga) as the field identification characters are not too clear.
- 10.3.82 Katraj Ghat - Near dusk, we disturbed a crested serpent eagle resting on a electricity pole, the bird took off lazily and landed a little ahead. We repeated this once and guessed its reluctance was probably because it was getting dark. Coming to a water hole, we flushed what turned out to be painted sandgrouse (refer Newsletter Vol.XXII, No.3).
- 21.4.82 Pashan Lake - Two Indian Whiskered terns in their summer black bellies led us to believe that they were black bellied terns, but checking the book, we found that the latter have a long forked tail.
- 22.4.82 Sinhagad - A white bellied drongo (Dicrurus caeruleascens) was sitting high up in a tree and calling away merrily, including in song, the calls of the koel, white breasted kingfisher, Malabar whistling thrush and some others. We came across coudung that had been gleaned by a red spurfowl (Galloperdix spadicea), which was seen twice that morning. A noisy chatter then caught our attention and the birds turned out to be a pair of Shamas (Copsychus malabaricus), a new record for Pune. The pair repeatedly dived at a hole in a tree. Going closer, I climbed up and out flew a bird. It was presumably the Peninsular scops owl (Otus scops rufipennis), also a record for the area.
- 28.4.82 Katraj Ghat - Ten feet up in a tree, we found short toed eagle (Circus gallicus). The nest was empty, but both parents kept to the area. A later visit to the next revealed nothing as the branch had been cut off, presumably by one of the numerous headloaders.
- 9.5.82 Sinhagad - As we watched a crested serpent eagle, it dived out of view into a thick tree covered ravine. Intrigued by this we followed

it. In a large tree, cleverly concealed by creepers was a large nest. I climbed up and found that the nest was lined by green leaves and contained a single egg. We were very thrilled by this find. The owl was seen again, but there was no sing of the shamas. The golden backed woodpecker, an infrequently seen bird in Pune was first heard and then we saw it 'rat-tat-tating', its bright red crest glistening in the sun.

A scurrying in the bush ahead of us cautioned us to be silent, and a short distance ahead of us, we saw the male of the painted spurfowl (Galloperdix lunata), yet another addition for Pune. In Mr. Abdulali's checklist, the bird is marked in brackets with occasional residence. This bird does appear in Mr. Trevenen's article J.B.N.H.S. Vol.28, but with no data as to the location of where the bird was seen.

- 9.5.82 Mula Mutha Bird Sanctuary - In a group of around twenty garganey teals (Anas querquedula), there was a single lesser whistling teal, or so we thought at first. But looking closely at it, revealed a few differences, the beak looked a little different, but more prominent, were the buffish white feathers near the tail. This bird has been seen here by Mr. Prakash Gole, seven years earlier. I checked a specimen at the B.N.H.S. and confirmed that it was a large whistling teal (Dendrocygna bicolor). Mr. Abdulali notes this bird as 'Resident stray'.
- 15.5.82 Sinhgad - A single painted spurfowl was seen again. The crested serpent eagle nest looked untidy and deserted, so I climbed up and was horrified to find no egg, but instead a whole lot of bits of fruits and langur droppings, under which were a few eggshell bits, which I collected.
- 24.5.82 Law College Hill - An overcast afternoon and quite hot. I was following a rat snake to its hole, when I was startled by a colourful blue flutter, that flew into the tree nearby. This was the first time I met the Indian pitta (Pitta brachyura) a bird rarely seen in Pune.

12.6.82 N.D.A. Road - We found two golden oriole (Oriolus oriolus) nests in a single banyan tree, but we couldn't ascertain whether both nests were built by the same pair. A pair of courting white bellied minivets (Pericrocotus erythropygus) was seen, but we couldn't find their nest.

29.6.82 Pashan Lake - A lone lesser flamingo (Phoeniconaias minor), an addition to Pune, was first seen feeding in the company of two openbill storks (Anastomus locitans). The bird was definitely uninjured and flew around quite majestically when disturbed. The Handbook Vol.1 gives the bird a 'status uncertain' with stray specimens as far as Secunderabad. The bird was last seen by us on July 17, 1982.

3.8.82 N.D.A. Road - a male common iora (Aegithina tiphia) led us to its nest while we were standing under the tree in which the bird had made its nest. On the opposite side of the road was the female, but she wouldn't come near while we were there. The nest contained two eggs. A little further down the same road was the remains of a pipe stuck into the ground about 2 feet tall with a diameter of about an inch and half, the top end was rusted and jagged. A grey tit (Parus major) carried a wriggling green caterpillar into this pipe and after a few seconds, flew off. Going closer, we could hear the young crying, and looking in, we counted three fluffy chicks. On further visits to the area, we were happy to see the three flying around, the parents feeding them.

In the vicinity of these two nests, were two little minivets (Pericrocotus cinnamomeus) nests, one in a rusty shield bearer tree and the other in a neem tree. The nest with the three young was in the neem tree and the parents were kept busy and alternatively brought beak fulls of food for their ever demanding offsprings.

11.10.82 Pashan Lake - A lone golden plover (Pluvialis dominica) was seen along the water's edge. A new sighting for the Pune list.



15.10.82 Law College - A Tailor bird (Orthotomus aitorius guzuratus) was involved in a hectic search for food to keep up with the demands of a large plaintive cuckoo, that kept on chirping and fluttering both wings simultaneously to attract its foster parent.

In June the same year, a single black tailed godwit (Limosa limosa) was seen once at Pashan lake.

In July, I watched a flock of Bayas (Ploceus philippinus) descend and merrily feed on the seeds of the drying Casuarina fruit pods. This habit was observed twice, once in the N.D.A. area, the second time being in the Aundh area.

In August, an old palm tree at Pashan that housed a number of baya nests, had one nest with a difference. The occupant was a white throated munia (Lonchura malabarica). The bird was seen taking leaves of Parthenium into the nest, obviously to line it. This nesting habit has been mentioned in 'The Book of Common Indian Birds'.

With regard to ducks, a fair number and variety visit the Pashan lake and the Mula Mutha river. They include pintail, shovellers, garganey teals, common teals, common pochards, white eyed pochards, wigeons, cotton teals, spotbill ducks, brahminy ducks, (9 birds seen once at Pashan) comb duck, lesser whistling teals (usually a close flock of 9). But, for some reason, the Tufted duck (Aythya fuligula) seen during the winter of 1980, both at Pashan and at the lakes along the Pune-Sholapur road, was not seen during the winter of 1981 at Pashan and this year, only a lone male was seen.

The migratory ducks arrived in mid-October in 1980, while in 1981, we caught a female Shoveller at Pashan on the 3rd of November, which had been shot in the breast. That was the first day that we saw migratory ducks. The sternum was smashed and the muscle around it was rotting. A visit to a veterinary surgeon proved a waste of time as the bird died a few hours later, and I stuffed it.

In conclusion, I would like to add that in a few places, I have written 'first sighting' or

'addition' for some of the birds that we have seen. This has been written after consultation with the many birders of Pune and checking the few references I could get my hands on. So, to the best of my knowledge, the sightings are a record for the area.

In the course of the article, I have often used words like 'we' or 'us', and haven't named the many birders I have gone out with, for which my apologies.

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Revisiting Kihim by Shama Futehally. A-139 Pandara Road, New Delhi 3: Readers of the Newsletter may have become familiar with Kihim, that almost sacred holiday resort of the Futehallys and related species. In childhood memory, the journey from Bombay to Kihim remains an adventure which was savoured the whole day long - the old landmaster car, sixty cautious miles and then the ferry at Dharemtar, a long-awaited picnic of hardboiled eggs and coffee, then the crossing of the ferry and more miles to the one and only red brick house, the one and only view of the sea between two casuarina trees. Adulthood, and a new bridge, have brought with them the sober information that Kihim is only fifteen miles south of Bombay and only two hours' drive away - but entering Kihim is magic still.

My knowledge of birds, such as it is, is all mapped on to Kihim - ring plovers are the dots you see by a certain large patch of rocks, black bellied finch-larks are the flesh of brown and black by the Kihim pond, the call of the spotted babbler is the call you hear as you walk past the third house from ours. This time I was returning after some years, and in the interim a fertiliser complex had raised an ugly head in the next village. But I discovered, with primitive relief, that my bird map was more or less unchanged and that therefore all was, more or less, well with the world.

Adjoining the house, there is a stump of casuarina which has been a favourite with Magpie Robins for some years - one year they nested in the stump. In tall old casuarinas at the edge of the compound there are usually whitebeaked vultures,

flapping and screeching messily in the leaves. Roseringed parakeets frequently rush overhead. Towards the beach there is the possibility of finding nesting holes made in the ground by common green bee-eaters; and a swift movement among the trees is likely to be a white breasted kingfisher. An attractive variation in the garden this year was a flock of small minivets, wholly unexpected, which appeared among these same casuarina trees early one morning. The high point of the evening was usually the weird and lugubrious call of the brown wood owl, which used to echo after dark from somewhere behind the house, toward the road. But there were no house crows in the garden, or, for that matter anywhere else in the vicinity. Once this thought had struck us we kept a lookout for them, but I cannot recall having seen any. Their place appeared to be usurped by jungle crows.

On our walks along the beach we saw the usual paddy birds, gull-billed terns, the odd sandpiper and one or two flocks of grey plovers. The latter must have been stragglers, as this was mid-May. This is a barren list compared to the winter months, which can yield little ringed plovers, redshanks, little stints, and the occasional pair of curlews. But one faithful seaside bird which did reveal itself, as it does every season, was the whitebellied sea eagle, which also nests in a particular casuarina by the beach. Its large slow white glide met us on more than one evening.

Apart from the beach, Kihim etiquette requires that one follow a proper birding route which has been hallowed by time. This begins along the kaccha road behind our house and leads first to a tried and tested banyan tree, then to mixed deciduous jungle (tesk, madhuca, odina) beyond. As we walked along the road one morning we heard the call of our spotted babbler, but we also heard a whitethroated ground thrush, tantalisingly near but impossible to locate. On the same road redwhiskered bulbuls are heard and seen all over; a grave coucal is a frequent sight. We found that the banyan tree was thickly inhabited by Copper-smiths, and we had a lovely view of a golden oriole for some minutes. Some flitting in the bushes was doggedly followed up, to be rewarded by the sight



of an iora. We went past the banyan to a coconut grove where a pair of grey hornbills were known to be nesting. We located the nest-hole, halfway up the trunk of a coconut tree, but had to give up on the hornbills after waiting for some time. As we came back on to the road we were luckier with the nest of a pair of ashy swallow-shrikes, which was built high up in a palmyra, with the birds themselves circling fiercely around it.

The next stage of our bird route is to cross the stubble fields behind these woods and reach the Kihim pond. Walking along the little dust path which goes through these fields I am always reminded of a remark once made by Dr. Salim Ali as he was trudging along the same path in his well-worn walking shoes and shorts. Looking over the acacia trees, and the yellow-brown stubble neat within rows of bunds, he said, 'This is not a very beautiful scene, but somehow it excites me as no other landscape does. Perhaps something about it is in our blood.' I wonder if he remembers saying this. Perhaps his sentiment has something to do with the fact that his first weaver bird study was carried out more or less on the very same spot.

Palm swifts are abundantly seen on this stretch, and whitebrowed bulbuls are abundantly heard. So, of course, are red-wattled lapwings. Little brown shapes have to be distinguished as being either house sparrows or weaver birds or yellowthroated sparrows which, incidentally, appeared in great profusion this year. A group of spotted birds pecking busily at the ground seemed at first to be pipits, but turned out to be three pairs of crested larks. There were common and jungle mynas, black drongoes and Indian robins in plenty, as there are all over the vicinity. We went out of our way to visit a little creek which seemed to harbour a rich bird life in the past, but the creek was empty and had nothing to say for itself apart from a little cormorant on a nearby tree. I think though that we did see a pied bushchat as we walked back on the main road. As we passed by some palmyras on the same road we heard a loud trilling. To this tone-deaf ear it sounded like a whitebreasted kingfisher, but it turned out to be a handsome goldenbacked woodpecker.

Our walk ended at the Kihim pond, made picturesque by a carpet of water-lilies, a small temple and washing-ghat in one corner, and overhanging acacias all around it. On a good day a visit to the pond can mean a view of coot, little grebe, whistling teal, purple moorhens, whitebreasted waterhens, both jacanas, pied kingfishers. In the winter months we have chalked up spotted sandpipers, cotton teal, garganey teal, pintail and spotbills. This, of course, is leading up to the big climax, viz. that on this occasion we saw a solitary median egret and a solitary common kingfisher. Stung by this defeat, our doughty editor went back to the pond next morning and came back having found a bronze-winged jacana.

I don't know if our observations mean that the bird life of the pond has been effected by the housing colonies of the fertiliser complex which have come up close to it. The Kihim pond was a jewel of a miniature waterscape, and if it is about to lose its life to the cause of chemicals, that will be hard to take.

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Hastinapur birds: Finn's Bayas-Tawny eagle-Crested honey buzzard by Y.M. Rai Grami, 414, Uttam Batika, W. Kutchery Road, Meerut 250001: Finn's bayas  
 (*Ploceus megarhynchus*) - The breeding of this bird has been observed by the author since June 1979 in Hastinapur marshland, 35 kms North East of Meerut. Most of my observations related to a seesam tree (*Dalbergia sissoo*) on which they bred every June-July in more than 30 nests. It was a joy to observe the displaying males in brilliant yellow and the females busy with their chores. In 1981 man's destructive hands felled the tree. When the males arrived in June they attempted to make nests on a nearby mango tree and a taller jamun tree. They succeeded building half a dozen nests only on the mango tree. The birds this summer colonised both the mango and jamun trees with a dozen nests, most of them on the jamun. As is the case every year, the breeding was over by the end of the 3rd week of July. The mango and jamun leaves are tougher to break than the *Dalbergia* but the birds defeafed

the tree tops as they used to do with the seesam. How long will it hold out is to be seen. Already, since 1979, there is a very great deal of reduction in the Finn's bayas breeding on trees in marshlands and it is now a rare sight to find a tree with their colony. Why the birds choose a particular tree for breeding is nature's unsolved mystery because about fifty yards farther than the jamun tree, there are seesam trees with the same marsh ecosystem, feeding ground, and nesting material growing.

Birds of prey: Tawny eagle and the crested honey buzzard were observed by the author breeding in Hastinapur forest in the summer of 1981 and 1982. Each year they reared only one young. This combined with the sudden decline of migrating birds of prey probably indicates decline in food resources. Earlier the ravines in this riverain tract abounded in reptiles and lizards. The tall trees formed their perch. Both have gone under the bulldozer for a canal (which engineers are always tempted to plan to claim most of the trees). Thus the future status of both the tawny eagle and the crested honey buzzard in this area is bleak.

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Nest making by Crimsonbreasted barbet (Magalaima haemacephala) by Sherman C/o. Dr. K.K. Sharma V.P.P.O. Talwandi Sabo, Pin.151302, Bhatinda District (PB): This bird is very common in Punjab. Its study about excavating a hole for laying eggs was also carried out in Punjab (dist. Bhatinda). In the very beginning only the male Barbet was seen excavating a hole in a somewhat curved stem of a shisham (Tahly) tree. This portion of the tree was dead. It had just started to excavate the hole. It was 25th of February 1982, and on that day the bird was seen sitting on the top of the tree calling its peculiar sound tuk-tuk-tuk. Most probably it was drawing the attention of its mate. But, however, all the while busy with its excavation work. The posture adopted while digging the hole was that it placed its head upward and the tail towards the stem. Suddenly it forces its beak towards the stem with a jerk. By 1st March the hole excavated was 2". Between



3rd and 6th March the barbet was nowhere to be seen. Again the male barbet made his appearance on 7th March alternatively digging and making the sound of tuk-tuk-tuk.

The male and the female were together seen on the 22nd of April. Now the male had got an additional hand for assisting him in his excavation work. The size of the hole slowly rose to 3' vertically from the stem. Then on the next day the female leaving the male alone, flew away. I saw the flight of the bird which after flying for a furlong captured a Sheesham tree and started her own excavation work without anyone's assistance. I noticed that the male and female barbets are self-reliant by nature except when one is assisted by the other once or twice in a month or two. But the most signal discovery made by me was that, that the two after completing their individual nests make an impartial appraisal of the nests keeping in view the holding capacity, safety and durability. Once a decision is arrived at, the other discards its nest (in this case the female barbet) and joins the other partner. After this both the male and the female started striving hard to make the size of the nest as bigger as possible, so as to facilitate the new arrivals a free movement without getting overcrowded. On the 1st of May I noticed that the female barbet was away from its nest for about half an hour, and when she arrived she had a red flower held firmly in her beak which she triumphantly threw down in her nest as if proclaiming her supremacy over the male. By the way their mating is yet to be noted.

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Common mynah (*Acridotheres tristis*) feeding on the manure earthworm (*Eisenia foetida*) during snowfall by Dr. J. M. Julka, Rathin Mukherjee, Zoological Survey of India, Solan, Himachal Pradesh: Solan township experienced its first snowfall of the season on 26th January during mid-day, which lasted for two hours. In fact, bad weather was prevailing in the surrounding area for the last four days. The sky was overcast by showers of rain which subsequently resulted in snowfall. After the fall, the sky was brighter and more clear.

We had been watching and observing that a lot of earthworms were crawling, and wriggling all over the wet and damp areas for the last few days. Now these worms were seen moving over the snow.

We noticed to our great surprise that the common mynahs were picking them up one by one with their small beaks and relishing them. The stinking brand maroon and brown coloured worms were very easily visible on the milky hoary carpet of fresh snow even from a long distance. The colour contrast phenomenon was a boon for the flight of weather beaten and hungry looking birds. Within an hour almost the entire worms were eaten up by the birds which were approximately forty in number, which comprised of juvenile, young and adult mynahs.

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The Black ibis in South India by K.K.Neelakantan, 'Kumaramangalam'. Thampanoor. Trivandrum-1:

With reference to Sri.R.Kannan's note on this subject in the Newsletter (XXIII 1-2, p.7) it may be pointed out that this bird not only occurs in some numbers but also breeds in some parts of the Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu. Around the heronry at Kundakulam (where, unfortunately, very few birds nested in the 80-81, 81-82 and 82-83 breeding seasons owing to the drought) one can always see the Black ibis without much difficulty. That the bird also breeds there was discovered by Miss Margaret Wilkinson in 1960 (vide her note on the Kundakulam heronry in the Journal BNHS, Vol 58, p.515). On 26 November, 1981, I saw a nest and three fully fledged young on a palmyra tree a few kilometers from the heronry. The largest numbers of black ibis seen by me at this place were 30 (or more) on 25.x.1981 (the birds were in a clump of Acacia trees standing in a shallow lake) and 17 or 18 resting together on the dry bed of another tank on 27.xi.1981.

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## ಜನಹಿತ ಸಾಧನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅರ್ಧಪೂರ್ಣ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳ ಆರು ತಿಂಗಳು

ಕಳೆದ ನೂರೈವತ್ತು ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಇಟ್ಟ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ ದಿಟ; ತಳೆದ ನಿಲುವು ಅಚಲ. ಕೈಗೊಂಡ ಕಾರ್ಯವನ್ನು ಆಗುಮಾಡುವ ವಿಶ್ವಾಸ.

- ಯೋಜನಾ ವೆಚ್ಚದಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ವರ್ಷ ನೂರು ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಳ.
- ಅಭಾವ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳಿಗೆ ಈ ವರೆಗೆ 50 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚ.
- ರೈತರು ಹಾಗೂ ಗ್ರಾಹಕರಿಗೆ ನೀಡಿರುವ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿ—ಸುಮಾರು 50 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.

**ಕುಡಿಯಲು ನೀರು:** ಕೃಷಿಗೆ ನೀರಾವರಿ:

ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರಿನ ತೀವ್ರ ಅಭಾವವಿರುವ ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ 25 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚದಲ್ಲಿ 12,800 ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳ ಸೌಕರ್ಯ. ಪಟ್ಟಣ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ 1.19 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚದಲ್ಲಿ 550 ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ. ಎಲ್ಲ ಹಳ್ಳಿಗೂ ನೀರು ಪೂರೈಕೆಗಾಗಿ 100 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಯೋಜನೆ.

ಹಳೆ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗಮನ. ದೊಡ್ಡ ಮತ್ತು ಮಧ್ಯಮ ನೀರಾವರಿಗೆ 89 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಈವೇರಿ ನದಿ ಕಣಿವೆ ಯೋಜನೆಗೆ 84 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. 80,000 ಸಾವಿರ ಎಕರೆಗೆ ಅಧಿಕ ನೀರಾವರಿ. 15 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚದಲ್ಲಿ 400 ಹೊಸ ಕೆರೆಗಳ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣ.

**ರೈತರಿಗೆ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿ:** ರೈತರಿಗೆ ಸುಮಾರು 36 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂಪಾಯಿಗಳಷ್ಟು ವಿವಿಧ ರೀತಿಯ ಪರಿಹಾರಗಳು.

**ಅಭಾವ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಕಾರ್ಯ:** ತೀವ್ರ ಅಭಾವ ಪೀಡಿತ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಪರಿಹಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಅದ್ಭುತ. 50 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚ. ಕೃಷಿ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರು, ರಸ್ತೆ ಮುಂತಾದ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ಕೆಲಸಗಾರರ ಕೂಲಿ ದರದಲ್ಲಿ ರೂ. 5ರಿಂದ 6.50ಕ್ಕೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಳ. ಅಭಾವ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಕಾರ್ಯ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆಗೆ ಪ್ರತಿ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಗೆ ಒಬ್ಬೊಬ್ಬ ಸಚಿವರ ನೇಮಕ.

**ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆ:** ಶೀಘ್ರದಲ್ಲೇ ಹೊಸ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕಾ ನೀತಿಯ ಪ್ರಕಟನೆ. ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಅದ್ಭುತ. ತಿಂಗಳಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸಾವಿರದಂತೆ ಸಣ್ಣ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆ ಘಟಕಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಗುರಿ.

**ಅಧಿಕಾರ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣ:** ಪುರಸಭೆ, ನಗರಸಭೆಗಳ ಚುನಾವಣೆಗೆ ನಿರ್ಧಾರ; ಹದಿನೆಂಟು ವರ್ಷ ತುಂಬಿದವರಿಗೆಲ್ಲ ಮತಾಧಿಕಾರ. ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಸೂಕ್ತ ಪ್ರಾತಿನಿಧ್ಯ.

**ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ:** ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ಶೀಲವೃದ್ಧಿ ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗುವ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ ರಚನೆ ಒಂದು ಮಹತ್ವದ ಕ್ರಮ. ಭ್ರಷ್ಟಾಚಾರದ ಅಪಾದನೆಗೆ ಒಳಗಾದ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ, ರಾಜಕಾರಣಿ ಈ ಸುಗ್ರಿವಾಜ್ಞೆಗೆ ಬದ್ಧ.

**ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಆಯೋಗ:** ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಹಿತರಕ್ಷಣೆಗೆ ನೇಮಕವಾದ ದ್ವಿತೀಯ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಆಯೋಗ ಹಾಗೂ ಅಲ್ಪಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆಗೆ ರಚಿತವಾಗಿರುವ ಅಲ್ಪಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಆಯೋಗಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಯಾರಂಭ. ಇದರಿಂದ ದುರ್ಬಲವರ್ಗದ ರಕ್ಷಣೆ. ಹರಿಜನ—ಗಿರಿಜನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಮಂಡಳಿಗೆ 12 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ನೀಡಿಕೆ.

**ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ:** ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರದ ಸಮಗ್ರ ಸುಧಾರಣೆಗೆ ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗುವ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ವಿಧೇಯಕಕ್ಕೆ ಸಿದ್ಧತೆ. ರಾಜ್ಯದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ನಿಗದಿಪಡಿಸಿದ ಮೆಡಿಕಲ್ ಸೀಟುಗಳಿಗೆ ಸೀಟು ಶುಲ್ಕ ರದ್ದು. ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಸೇವೆಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಹಾಗೂ ಸ್ವೈಚ್ಛೇಡರಿ ಪದವೀಧರರೂ ಹಾಗೂ ಇತರ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಸೇವೆಗೆ ಸೇರಲು ಗರಿಷ್ಠ ವಯೋಮಿತಿ ಏರಿಕೆ. ದಿಗ್ರಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಸ್ನಾತಕೋತ್ತರ ಪದವಿಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅತ್ಯುತ್ತಮ ಅಂಕ ಪಡೆದ ಹರಿಜನ—ಗಿರಿಜನ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಾಗಿ ನೇರ ನೇಮಕದ ಅವಕಾಶ. ಹೊಸ ಇಂಗ್ಲೀಷ್ ಶಾಲೆಗಳ ಮಂಜೂರಾತಿ ರದ್ದು.

**ಆಡಳಿತದಲ್ಲಿ ಕನ್ನಡ:** ಆಡಳಿತದಲ್ಲಿ ಕನ್ನಡ ಬಳಕೆ ಕಡ್ಡಾಯ. ಕನ್ನಡ ಬಳಕೆ ಆಗುತ್ತಿದೆಯೇ ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಪರಿಶೀಲಿಸಿ, ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳಿದ್ದರೆ ಸಲಹೆ ಸೂಚಿಸಲು ಕಾವಲು ಸಮಿತಿ.

ಅರಣ್ಯ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ, ಮನೆಯಿಲ್ಲದವರಿಗೆ ಮನೆ, ನಿವೇಶನ, ಇಲಾಖಾ ಸಲಹಾ ಸಮಿತಿಗಳ ನೇಮಕ. ಹೀಗೆ ಜನಹಿತಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿರುವ ಕ್ರಮಗಳು ಹಲವಾರು. ಸಾಧನೆಗೆ ಕ್ರಮಬದ್ಧವಾಗಿ ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರತ. ಪ್ರಥಮ ವರ್ಷದ ಪ್ರಥಮಾರ್ಧದಲ್ಲಿ ಆಶಾದಾಯಕ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ, ಮಹಾ ಜನತೆಗೆ ನೀಡಿರುವ ಆಶ್ವಾಸನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಈಡೇರಿಸಲು ಪಣತೊಟ್ಟಿದೆ. ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ.

**ಪ್ರಕಟನೆ:—** ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು



## **Madhya Pradesh Abounds in Fascinating Flora and Fauna**

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*Cover Picture:* Common Green Bee-Eater — Courtesy E. HANUMANTHA RAO

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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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## ಜನಹಿತ ಸಾಧನೆ ವಚನ ಪಾಲನೆ

ಜನತೆಗಿತ್ತ ವಚನಪಾಲನೆಗಾಗಿ ಜನತೆಯ ಅಶೋತ್ತರಗಳ ಈಡೇರಿಕೆಗಾಗಿ ಕಳೆದ ಏಳು ತಿಂಗಳ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಇಟ್ಟ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ ದಿಟ್ಟ; ತಳೆದ ಸಿಲುಕು ಅಚಲ.

**ಅಧಿಕಾರ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣ**—ಪುರಸಭೆ ನಗರಸಭೆಗಳ ಚುನಾವಣೆ. ಹದಿನೆಂಟು ವರ್ಷ ತುಂಬಿದವರಿಂದಲೂ ಮತ ಚಲಾವಣೆ. ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಸೂಕ್ತ ಪ್ರಾತಿನಿಧ್ಯ. ಇದು ಅಧಿಕಾರ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣದತ್ತ ಹೊಸ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಇಟ್ಟ ದಿಟ್ಟ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ—ಜನತೆಗಿತ್ತ ವಚನಪಾಲನೆ.

**ಕನ್ನಡಕ್ಕೆ ಅಗ್ರಸ್ಥಾನ**—ಗೋಕಾಕ್ ಸಮಿತಿಯ ವರದಿಯಂತೆ ಕನ್ನಡವನ್ನು ಏಕೈಕ ಪ್ರಥಮ ಭಾಷೆಯನ್ನಾಗಿ ಮಾಡುವುದಕ್ಕೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಈಗಾಗಲೇ ಮಹತ್ವಪೂರ್ಣವಾದ ಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿದೆ. ಕನ್ನಡೇತರ ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕಡ್ಡಾಯವಾಗಿ ಕನ್ನಡ ಬೋಧನೆ. ಕನ್ನಡ ಬೋಧಿಸಲು ಉಪಾಧ್ಯಾಯರ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ.

**ಅಡಳಿತದಲ್ಲಿ ಕನ್ನಡ**—ಅಡಳಿತ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರದಲ್ಲೂ ಕಳೆದ ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ 15ರಿಂದ ಕನ್ನಡ ಬಳಕೆ ಕಡ್ಡಾಯ. ಕನ್ನಡ ಬಳಕೆ ಆಗುತ್ತಿದೆಯೇ ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಪರಿಶೀಲಿಸಿ, ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳಿದ್ದರೆ ಸಲಹೆ ಸೂಚಿಸಲು ಕಾವಲು ಸಮಿತಿ.

**ರೈತರಿಗೆ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿ**—ಅತ್ಯಲ್ಪ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ರೈತ ಸಮುದಾಯಕ್ಕೆ 81 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂಪಾಯಿಯ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ. 38 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂಪಾಯಿಗಳ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಸಾಲಗಳ ಮನ್ನಾ, ಸಕಾಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಹಕಾರಿ ಸಾಲ ಮರುಪಾವತಿ ಮಾಡಿದವರಿಗೆ 28 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂಪಾಯಿ ಬಡ್ತಿ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿ, ವಿಫಲಗೊಂಡ :ನೀರಾವರಿ ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳ ಸಾಲ ಮತ್ತು ಬಡ್ತಿಯ ಮನ್ನಾ ಸುಮಾರು 15 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಹೊಸದಾಗಿ ನೀರಾವರಿಯಾದ ಭೂಮಿಗೆ ಐದು ವರ್ಷಗಳ ಕಾಲ ನೀರು ತೆರಿಗೆಯಿಂದ ವಿನಾಯಿತಿ, ಸಾಲದ ಅರ್ಜಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ಟಾಂಪ್ ಶುಲ್ಕ ವಿನಾಯಿತಿ, ಡಿಫಾಲ್ಟರ್ ಆಗಿದ್ದ ರೈತರಿಗೆ ನಾಬಾರ್ಡ್‌ನ ಏಳೂವರೆ ಬಡ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲೇ ಸಾಲ, ಜತೆಗೆ ಶೇಕಡ ಐದರಷ್ಟು ಸಹಾಯಧನ—ಇವು ರೈತರಿಗೆ ನೀಡಲಾಗಿರುವ ಇನ್ನಿತರ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯಗಳು.

**\*ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು**—ಕೇವಲ ಆರು ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 13,350 ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣದ ಅಪೂರ್ವ ದಾಖಲೆ. ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ಕಾಗಿ 25 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚ. ಎಲ್ಲ ಹಳ್ಳಿಗಳಿಗೂ ನೀರು ಪೂರೈಕೆಗಾಗಿ 100 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಯೋಜನೆ.

**\*ನೀರಾವರಿ**—ಹಳೇ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗಮನ. ದೊಡ್ಡ ಮತ್ತು ವ.ಧ್ಯಮ ನೀರಾವರಿಗೆ 89 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಕಾವೇರಿ ನದಿ ಕಣವೆ ಯೋಜನೆಗೆ 84 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. 80,000 ಎಕರೆಗೆ ಅಧಿಕ ನೀರಾವರಿ. 15 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚದಲ್ಲಿ 400 ಕೆರೆಗಳ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣ.

**ಅಂತ್ಯೋದಯ**—ಬಡವರಲ್ಲಿ ಬಡವರಾದವರ ಸರ್ವಾಂಗೀಣ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗಾಗಿ ಅಂತ್ಯೋದಯ ಯೋಜನೆ. ಈ ಯೋಜನೆ ಯಿಂದ ಪ್ರತಿ ವರ್ಷ ಒಂದು ಲಕ್ಷಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಬಡ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ. ಕಡು ಬಡ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳನ್ನು ಗುರುತಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯ ಈಗಾಗಲೇ ತ್ವರಿತಗತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಗಿದೆ.

**ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆ**—ಹೊಸ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆ ನೀತಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಿ. ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಅದ್ವೈತ. ತಿಂಗಳಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸಾವಿರದಂತೆ ಸಣ್ಣ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕಾ ಘಟೆಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಗುರಿ.

**ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗದವರ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ**—ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗದ ಜನತೆಯ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ದ್ವಿತೀಯ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಆಯೋಗ ನೇಮಕ. ಅಲ್ಪಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಹಿತರಕ್ಷಣೆಗಾಗಿ ಮೊಟ್ಟ ಮೊದಲ ಬಾರಿಗೆ ಆಯೋಗವೊಂದರ ನೇಮಕ-ಹರಿಜನ-ಗಿರಿಜನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಮಂಡಳಿಗೆ 12 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ನೀಡಿಕೆ.

**ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ**—ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರದ ಸುಧಾರಣೆಗಾಗಿ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ವಿಭೇಯಕ—ರಾಜ್ಯದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಮೆಡಿಕಲ್ ಸಿಟಿಗಳ ಶುಲ್ಕ ರದ್ದು. ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ಪೆಷಲೈಸೆಡ್ ಪದವೀಧರರು ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಸೇವೆಗೆ ಸೇರಲು ಗರಿಷ್ಠ ವಯೋಮಿತಿ ಏರಿಕೆ. ಕೆಲವೊಂದು ಡಿಗ್ರಿ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ನಾತಕೋತ್ತರ ಪದವಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಅಂಕ ಪಡೆದ ಹರಿಜನ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಿಗಾಗಿ ನೇರ ನೇಮಕದ ಅವಕಾಶ. ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಅಂತಹ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ 2500.00 ರೂ. ನಗದು ಬಹುಮಾನ.

**ನೈಸರ್ಗಿಕ ಸಮಶೋಲನ ಕಾಪಾಡಲು** ಮರ ಗಿಡಗಳನ್ನು ಬೆಳೆಸುವ ಬೃಹತ್ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ, ಮನೆ ಇಲ್ಲದವರಿಗೆ ಮನೆ, ನಿವೇಶನ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ, ಕುರಲ ಕರ್ಮಿಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿಶೇಷ ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹ-ಸವಲತ್ತುಗಳು ಹೀಗೆ ಜನಹಿತಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿರುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳು ಹಲವಾರು. ಸಾಧನೆಗೆ ಕ್ರಮಬದ್ಧವಾಗಿ ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರತವಾಗಿದೆ ನಿಮ್ಮ ಸರ್ಕಾರ.

**ಮಹಾಜನತೆಗೆ ನೀಡಿರುವ ಆಶ್ವಾಸನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಈಡೇರಿಸಲು ಪಣತೊಟ್ಟಿದೆ**—ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

**ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಿ:— ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು**



## KING VULTURE *Torgus Calvus*

This is a huge black vulture, which can be easily identified by its bright red featherless head, neck, legs and thighs. White patches at the base of the neck and on the upper thighs are additional distinctive features. In a bird flying overhead, the red head, white patches on the breasts and thighs and a thin light coloured band along underside of stretched wings conspicuous even from a long distance.

It is a scavenger like other vultures and feeds on animal carcasses. However, it is much less gregarious than the others. One might see at an animal carcass, one or two King Vultures feeding in the company of a large gathering of the other vulture species.

The bird breeds sometimes during December and April. The nest is built usually on the top of a very large tree but sometimes a short tree (2-3 metres) also may be used. In Saurashtra the bird is also reported to breed on the rock ledges of hills. During the breeding season, the birds perform a spectacular aerial courtship display.

The bird was never very common, but, was often seen almost throughout Saurashtra, Kutch and North Gujarat. In recent times it has become extremely rare. Today its main strong holds seem to be the Gir Forest and its surroundings, Kala Dungar in Kutch and probably some parts of Panch Mahals.

We would like to have the following information on the king vulture.

- 1 When and where you last saw this bird ?
- 2 When and where you last saw its nest ?
- 3 In your opinion what is the status of this bird in your area ?
- 4 If this birds occurs in your area, would you care to look for its nest during the next winter ?

Any information that you might like to convey regarding this bird, may be kindly sent to :

**Shree Shivrajkumar Khacher**  
Darbargadh JASDAN-360 050 (Gujarat)

NEWSLETTER  
FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

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## Editorial

The speed of cattle egrets: It is not easy to assess the speed of various birds, but Arvind Gupte, of Rasulia Pratap Nagar, Hoshangabad 461001 writes: 'On March 1, 1983 I travelled by bus from Indore to Bhopal. In the evening a flock of about 45 cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) started flying alongside the bus in typical V-formation. The road was fairly good and the bus was doing a steady 65 km per hour. For 4 kms the birds kept up with the bus which then stopped to disembark some passengers. The egrets flew on with steady beats of their wings.'

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Useful and harmful effects of birds on agriculture: How difficult it is to understand the harmful and beneficial effects of birds on agriculture is indicated by a seven year study by Indra Kumar Sharma in Jodhpur. He has studied carefully the preferred food of ring doves, little brown doves, pigeons, peafowl, sparrows, bayas, munias, crows, mynas, rosy pastors, bee eaters and several more. Some birds like the black drongo, grey shrike, Indian roller, hoopoe, Indian robin, warblers and owls appear to be entirely beneficial. But doves, pigeons and sparrows do a great deal of harm by destroying grain. Sharma concludes by saying: 'the large number of species which visit agricultural farms are useful as controllers of insect pests, and some species reduce the seeds of weeds, E.G. doves, partridge, sandgrouse and larks. Only a few are harmful and these include the house sparrow, parakeet and pigeon'. But Sharma says, even this damage is only caused in areas close to villages.

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A visit to Ruhsa in North Arcot district, Tamilnadu: The well known Christian Medical College in Vellore, has spawned a most impressive social service unit in Ruhsa. (Rural Unit for Health and Social Service). The objective is to give training in various disciplines relevant to the rural needs of our country and the results justify this endeavour. The Institute is not far from the Pala river which appeared to be starved for water during our visit in the middle of August. For the last three years rains have been very sub-normal in this area. *Proscopis juliflora* appeared to have subdued the local vegetation, and *parthenium* flourished on both wet and dry land. There was plenty of bird life including redwattled lapwings, black drongos, common mynas, blackheaded munias, blue jays, redvented bulbuls, whiteheaded babblers. But



suddenly, on the ground, amidst a cluster of *proscopis juliflora* shrubs I saw a pair of pied crested cuckoos. They were silent, moved around leisurely, and copulated seemingly without any excitement. Another interesting encounter was with a colony of bayas making their nests on telegraph wires above a Jowar field. Some of the nests were multi-storyed with as many as four chambers one below the other. The males had bright yellow heads and they proceeded to build silently without the builders chorus which is so often heard on these occasions, and which perhaps encourages the birds to give of their best.

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The great horned owl: I have just seen the splendid book 'Sunlight and Shadows by Y.M. Ghorpade. There are some photographs of the Indian great horned owl (*Bubo bubo*), and as it happened, on the very day that I saw the photograph in the book, I was able to see the bird in a neighbours compound. It was an hour before sunset (22nd August) and the bird was not bothered by the bright sunlight. There is a family of these owls on this land, and I hope to report on them again.

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Birdwatching at Gondal by Shri Dharmakumarsinhji,  
26 Lotus court, Jamshedji Tata Road, Bombay 400 020:  
 This hot weather Gondal was unusually pleasant, none of the too or high temperatures beyond 40°C. In fact, winds played truant from North to South West. Anyway, where is Gondal? If you were to put your finger in the very centre of Kathiawar peninsula (Saurashtra) you would blindly jack-pot Gondal at about 22 N and 71 E. The climate is dry and days of mist can be hot. This year was a drought year and the nearby Gondali Tank had dried but was flush green planted with Milo crop. Here I saw cattle egrets, painted francolin lesser florican, bustard-quail and many insectivorous birds. It was a carpet of green as if in August. Below the tank are some bunds forming basins or pools with trickling water. It was in these watercourses of the Gondali river that I did most of my birdwatching. At end of April, there was an influx of whiskered terns that gyrated over the ponds feeding and I noticed gullbilled terns, river and black-bellied terns also. But it was in the muddy basin below the lake dam that attracted lot of egrets from the little to the largest and even grey herons, and large flamingoes.

At a bridge below the dam, I saw numerous water birds, i.e., curlew, dunlin, common, green, spotted, sandpipers, and ruff but a hen dusky red shank was a new item, a real vagrant. Green shank, little stints and a solitary pintail in middle of May in deeper pool was strange. Groups numbering over 50 of purple moorhens, fearlessly fed in mud and dry land in the open. Except for common kites I once saw a bedraggled pair of redheaded merlins. There were many pheasant tailed jacanas in non breeding plumage waiting for the rains as they had ideal nesting habitat in a thick patch of water hyacinth. And purple and pond herons near rushes of typha. Once in May, a pair of openbilled storks arrived. Whereas small flights of lesser whistling teal and spot bills were usual but what was most attractive was a flock of cotton teal, a male or two in full plumage. They kept judiciously to a patch of floating aquatic plants. There were little grebes and cormorants, and all the three king fishers, pied common and whitebreasted, the latter two, nesting. A pied wagtail and wiretailed swallows were also nesting below the bridge. On the sandbanks, common bee eaters nested and I saw many striated swallows and sand martins. In the pools close to reeds were Indian moorhens and coots and flights of black ibises, spoonbills, white ibises would alight at the water's edge, as did common sand grouse for drinking between 8 am to 10.30 am. Solitary birds revealed that some were nesting. All along the 2 kilometer stretch of the riverside had R.W.Lapwings (nesting) and blackwinged stilts. What was conspicuous was the absence of eagles and large falcons and even buzzards. In a palace garden, I saw a pair of magpie robins nesting as did common parakeets, mynas and even a pair of shikras. At end of May, a pair of grey francolins had small chicks. Earlier, groups of large cuckoo shrikes and crested honey buzzards took refuge in the tall old trees. Renowned for its old and tall trees Gondal is the roosting place of countless house crows and the peafowl, as if feral, allowing handfeeding and displaying their gorgeous trains even in front of cats and dogs. I know of no better place to study peafowl, they are so confiding here. Owing to last November cyclone countless large old trees crashed and I wondered whether the jungle babblers had forsaken Gondal. At a Eucalyptus forest nursery, I only saw small minivets, Indian tree pipits, grey babblers, as the grove does not attract much bird life. At the palace I once saw a female paradise flycatcher. This is not a checklist of birds I saw but gives some idea of what can be interesting at Gondal riverside. The largest tank in Kathiawar is the

Bhader only 12 miles away which attracts myriad of cranes and waterfowl during the winter including pelicans. Here I saw the large pratincoles nesting in March some years ago as also little terns. After the Monsoon, the Gondal tanks teem with waterfowl and the now dry tank is full of ducks and waders. Rajkot some 24 miles north is the nearest airport. At Gondal the whitebacked vultures nest in trees and most young had fully fledged and were on the wing. Some longbilled vultures and the small scavenger vultures are quite common.

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Flamingos in Pune district by A.S. Mahabab, Zoologist, Zoological Survey of India, Western Regional Station 1182/2, Fergusson College Road, Pune 411005 (Maharashtra):  
 Flamingo, (*Phoenicopterus roseus*), a long-legged, long necked stork like bird of pink hue, is rather irregularly distributed in India. Although it is a resident bird, it migrates locally during its non-breeding season probably depending upon the water and food conditions. The Flamingo has been mentioned by Abdu Ali (1973) in his 'Checklist of Birds of Maharashtra' and its status has been indicated as uncommon.

Ketkar and Gray (1971) have recorded approximately sixty Flamingos at Madh (Pune district) on 7th September 1970. This is the only authentic record of their occurrence and distribution in Pune district. In July 1979, P. Gole (pers. comm.) has observed about 1000 Flamingos again at Madh area. E. Bharucha (pers. comm.) has noticed about 18 Flamingos, about 65 kms east of Pune at Patas (Daund Taluka, Pune district) in August 1981. He has also communicated that they arrived at Patas on 2nd August 1981 and left this place on 21st August 1981.

In July 1982, following a news paper report about Flamingos, we visited Madh, (Junnar Taluka, Pune Dist. Maharashtra; 19° 15'N, 73° 46'E) to observe the behaviour of these rarely occurring birds. Madh is situated about 110 kms North of Pune in the valley of Pushpawati river. This valley has many ponds and ricefields. At this place we noticed a flock of 195 Flamingos accompanied by a few cattle egrets and little egrets. They were standing in shallow water of the ricefields. According to a local observer P.G. Mate (pers. comm.), Flamingos arrived at this place on



29th July 1982 and left on 31st August 1982. He has also communicated that the Flamingos have been visiting this place every year only in the rainy season since 1976.

This year (1983) in the first week of May, one of the authors (S.N.) noticed Flamingos at Bhigwan (Indapur Taluka, Pune district, Maharashtra; 18° 20'N; 74° 48'E) for the first time, this being the third record in the district. Bhigwan is located about 100 kms to the east of Pune on Pune Sholapur highway. The backwaters of Ujani dam on the river Bhima have reached upto Bhigwan. The water is shallow in this area of 3 to 4 sq.km. and is surrounded by sparse vegetation and agricultural land. We visited this place several times in May and June 1983 and every time we counted between 850-900 Flamingos. They were observed mostly in 6-7 flocks each comprising between 23 and 350 birds. During visits (by S.N.) in the first week and third week of July 1983 only 400 and 20 Flamingos respectively were noticed; probably others had migrated from this place.

We do not know whether the Flamingos will regularly visit this place year after year. It is therefore necessary to keep a record every year for their status survey. It would also be interesting to study their migratory patterns and directional routes in Pune district.

#### References:

- Abdu Ali, Humayun (1973). Checklist of the birds of Maharashtra with notes on their Status around Bombay. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay.
- Ketkar, S.M. and Lincoln Gray (1971). Occurrence of the Flamingo in interior Maharashtra. J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc., 68(1): 241-242.

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Aquatic birds in Burhagar tank, Jabalpur, M.P. by Shri. D.F. Singh and others. Zoological Survey of India, 1544/A. Napier Town, Jabalpur 482001: Jabalpur and its environs have been blessed with a large number of water bodies, lakes, ponds, marshes abound where aquatic vegetation flourishes. These places are the abode of a number of not only resident, but also of migratory birds. Burhagar tank was selected for the study where a considerable number of birds can be seen throughout the year. Rahmani (1981) made an extensive record of the birds of Narora reservoir (U.P.). Basil-Edwards (1926), Donahue (1967), and Frome (1947) also made a general bird survey of Delhi and its surrounding areas, but no such record from Jabalpur is available.

Burhagar tank (Lat.  $23^{\circ}21'N$ . Long.  $80^{\circ}1'E$ ) is 22.4 kms away from Jabalpur on Jabalpur-Katni road. It is about 65 hectares in area. The north side of the tank is marshy having a thick belt of Lotus plants (Nelumbo nucifera). The west side has a stone embankment with steps leading to the water edge. Here the depth is more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  meters. The water surface here is free of plants and the people use this area for bathing and washing cloths. The south and east sides are relatively shallow where extensive Singhara cultivation is done.

A year round ecological study of the tank was conducted in 1981. The bird survey formed a part of the total pond ecosystem study. Field observations (thrice a week) were made with the help of 10 x 50 field binoculars. The following are some of the important birds which were observed in Burhagar tank during one year study:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Abundance</u>
Dabchick ( <u>Podiceps ruficollis</u> )	+++
Large cormorant ( <u>Phalacrocorax carbo</u> )	+
Little cormorant ( <u>P. niger</u> )	+++
Darter ( <u>Anhinga rufa</u> )	+++
Pond heron ( <u>Ardeola grayii</u> )	+++
Cattle egret ( <u>Bubulcus ibis</u> )	+++
Little egret ( <u>Egretta garzetta</u> )	+++
Painted stork ( <u>Ibis leucocephalus</u> )	++
Openbill stork ( <u>Anastomus oscitans</u> )	++

White ibis ( <u>Threskiornis melanocephala</u> )	++
Black ibis ( <u>Pseudibis papillosa</u> )	++
Common teal ( <u>Anas crecca</u> )	+++
Common shelduck ( <u>Tadorna tadorna</u> )	+++
Brahminy duck ( <u>Tadorna ferruginea</u> )	++
Cotton teal ( <u>Nettapus coromandelianus</u> )	++
Comb duck ( <u>Sarkidiornis melanotos</u> )	+
Sarus crane ( <u>Grus antigone</u> )	+
Purple moorhen ( <u>Porphyrio porphyrio</u> )	+++
White breasted waterhen ( <u>Amourornis phoenicurus</u> )	++
Coot ( <u>Fulica atra</u> )	+++
Pheasant-tailed Jacana ( <u>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</u> )	+++
Bronzewinged Jacana ( <u>Metopidius indicus</u> )	+++
Pied kingfisher ( <u>Ceryle rudis</u> )	+++
Whitebreasted kingfisher ( <u>Halcyon smyrnensis</u> )	+++
Blackwinged stilt ( <u>Himantopus himantopus</u> )	+++
Redwattled lapwing ( <u>Vanellus indicus</u> )	+++
(+++ Abundant, ++ common, + rare)	

Out of the 26 birds listed, 16 species were abundant, 7 common and 3 rare. These birds were seen throughout the year except the common shelduck and comb duck which were observed during the winter season (Nov-Jan.). Only one pair of Sarus crane were seen.

The painted storks, openbills and little egrets were observed to nest on the babul trees (Acacia arabica) growing on the south and west sides of the tank. The Moorhens, Jacanas, coots and waterhens were seen to make their nests amongst the lotus plants (on the north side) which offers ample protection. This area is marshy which discourages the people and cattle from going there. Looking at the abundance of the aquatic birds, this place offers a potential waterbird sanctuary.

Acknowledgements: Thanks are due to the Director, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta for allowing to undertake this work and to the Officer-in-Charge, ZSI, Jabalpur for facilities.

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Breeding of tailor birds by Miss Vishu Katiyar. Akshava-Vat. W5/94. D.N. Ka Hatha. Paota. Jodhpur 342006: The cute little tailor bird with its loud cheerful 'towit-towit-towit' or 'pretty-pretty-pretty' always fascinates me. Whenever I water the plants in my garden this little bird comes chirping and takes its bath, fluttering its wings on the wet leaves, but gives me a good chase if I try to give it a direct shower.

In July I heard twittering of this bird quite often in our garden. To my delight I saw it building its nest in the Mogra (Jasmine sambae) shrubery growing about a metre high. It was 14th July 1982 when I first watched the tailor bird building its nest by stitching two (mogra) leaves together. Each leaf being approximately 11 cms. by 8 cms. It artistically knotted the cotton thread at the ends to prevent the sewing getting undone by tension. The next day, it started filling it with pure white cotton. After constructing the base for its nest, surprisingly, it left it till the morning of 23rd July. It seemed the bird had deserted it due to some premonition about its possible destruction. Meanwhile it had got wet by the rains. But to my delight the tailor bird resumed building on the 23rd July, late in the afternoon. From where it collected the material I could not find out, but it brought such pure white cotton which appeared to be straight from the factory. The bird might have found some cotton plants in nearby gardens. On the 24th morning the nest was completed. The bird had used some fine spikelets from a broom (Phool Jharoo), rootlets and goat's hair (black, brown and white) along with the cotton to give the nest a good shape and base inside. I could not differentiate between the male and the female from the distance but I observed that the one with comparatively longer tail took the major part in nest building.

By 25th late afternoon there was a small white egg with a few small reddish brown spots on it. On 26th the bird added another egg and by 28th (July) morning there were three beautiful eggs in the nest. But it was not the end, on 29th morning the score was four. Among the pair, the one with shorter tail started incubating the eggs.

On the 9th (August) morning two very small chicks hatched out. They were pink all over with no trace of feathers at that time. Their eyes had not opened and they opened their small beaks for food at the slightest

movement in the nest thinking that their parents had come to feed them. On the 10th another egg hatched and on the 11th there were four baby birds in the nest. Both the parents became very busy in bringing food for their young ones. They used to bring mouthful of tiny insects or caterpillars etc. Slowly and steadily feathers started growing on the chicks and their skin became dark which was pink before. Seeing any foe like the crow, cat or even human beings, the tailor birds used to make alarm calls and everytime a crowd of birds like sparrows and bulbuls used to gather on the spot. On the other hand, once when I went quite near to the nest, the chicks made a sort of hissing sound in agnostic behaviour which I confirmed by approaching the nest a few more times. Any how the tailor birds took great pains in brining up their young ones.

On the 17th August they coaxed and brought out one of the four from the nest, from the very start teaching the young how to hop and fly at a low level. The next day two more chicks started off from the nest to discover the new world around. The fourth one also left the nest on the 19th. All of them dispersed in the garden. Under the protection and loving care of their parents they started learning to fly and look for their food as well as to keep themselves out of danger.

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Tailor bird in laboratory by Taej Mundkur, 124/9 Brandavana, Poona 411004: A broken window in our microbiology laboratory overlooks a mango tree. One morning during our practicals a tailor bird flew in through the window and landed on an alluminium rack, next to a glass flask stoppered with a large cotton wool plug. It kept pulling out bits of cotton. Its beak full, it flew out only to return in fifteen minutes for another beak load. We were sitting within ten feet from the bird. I managed to snap a few shots of the bird at work, as I had brought along my camara to college to snap the red wattled lapwing nest with 3 eggs on our college roof three floors up. This nesting site was been used every year for atleast five years now and previous newsletters have contained information about them.

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The pink headed ducks by Lalit Singh: In our country many wild birds and animals faced extinction in the beginning of this century. Among the birds was the uniquely coloured pinkheaded duck.

As its name suggests, this beautiful duck had a pink head and a narrow pink neck. It also possessed a pink bill with a bluish tip. This bird had blackish brown feathers above and below the body, and also a pink and white patch on the wings called the speculum. This bird had fairly long legs, a thick body and a short tail. When in flight the pink colour under the wings contrasted beautifully with the blackish brown colour of the body.

In the male, the pink on the head and neck was more prominent than that in the female. The head of the male was also partially tufted unlike that of the females. The colour of the feathers above and below the body was also darker in the male compared to the females'. The female's speculum was duller than that of the male's, and the male had a black band from the chin to the breast which was completely absent in the female. The male also had an orange iris unlike the brownish orange iris of the female. One more point of differentiation was that the legs of the male were reddish black but those of the female's were brown.

The immature pinkheaded ducks were paler than the adults with their heads and necks greyish pink.

This beautiful duck was mainly found in the region which is now Bangladesh. This area was previously covered with dense forests, tall grass and swamps. Due to these reasons many wild animals and waterfowl resided here among which was the unique pinkheaded duck. This duck was also found in the swampy areas of the Himalayan terai, Oudh, the swampy jungles between Nepal and Assam and in Manipur. It was also reportedly, found in Andhra (Nellore) and in Maharashtra (Jalna).

Very little is known about the habits of this duck. After many years of effort, three pairs were caught alive and in 1925 were brought to the Foxwarren Park, Surrey (but the first to come to Europe, was a pair which was brought to the London Zoo in 1874). In captivity these birds flourished and some lived to over twelve years in Foxwarren Park. But although the males displayed to the females frequently, the birds never bred.



'The voice of the male was a whizzy whistle'. This is how one author has described the male's call. It was like that of the Mallard's but was lower and weaker. The females only gave low quacks.

The males displayed to the females in groups. The courtship display was again similar to that of the Mallard's but was more simple. During display the males puffed out the short feathers of their head, shortened their necks and rested them on their backs. After this they stretched their necks and uttered their call. The females posed during this time as the female dabbling ducks do.

The nesting of these ducks took place from April to July. The nest was a round structure built out of grass, and was placed on the ground under the protection of clumps of grass. It was generally built some distance away from the water. The nest contained a clutch of five to ten white, smooth and almost perfectly spherical eggs generally measuring 47 x 43 mm. Both the male and the female performed an 'injury-feigning' display to draw away intruders near the nest. During the breeding season these birds were usually seen alone or in pairs unlike in the winter when they collected in groups of six to ten birds or even more.

The relationship of this duck with other ducks is uncertain. In many of its habits and some anatomical features it resembles the dabbling ducks, for example in the form of its feet. In captivity it was found feeding like dabbling ducks, not diving into the water for its food, but the structure of its windpipe suggests that it could dive for its food like the diving ducks. However these ducks have never been known to have dived for food in ordinary circumstances therefore they are considered as dabbling ducks.

In captivity these birds never quarreled among themselves or with other ducks and it is known that they never mixed with other species of duck in the wild.

These ducks have been known to be partially migratory. They were never abundant and though considered the least tasty of ducks were killed by sportsmen only because of their rarity. This was one of the main reasons of their decline.

Secondly, when the population of Bangladesh began to grow, the forests and grasslands were cut and the swamps were drained which resulted in the destruction of this duck's habitat.

It is a pity that the modern methods of captive breeding were not developed at that time. Otherwise these ducks could have been bred in captivity.

The last reliable sighting of this duck in the wild was made in June 1935 by C.M. Inglis in the Darbhanga district of Bihar. (The last of the captive specimen died in 1944).

In 1956 the killing, capture and collection of eggs of this duck was declared illegal by the Indian Government but by then the bird was certainly extinct as in the 1950's an attempt by the B.N.H.S. to obtain sightings of this bird failed.

In writing this article the following books have been consulted:

'The Waterfowl of the World' (Volume II) by Jean Delacour.

'The Book of Indian Birds' - by Dr. Salim Ali

'Vanishing Birds' - by Tim Halliday.

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The Indian Roller by Ranjit Daniels. CTS/CES. Indian Institute of Science. Bangalore 560012: The Indian Roller, popularly known as the 'Blue Jay' is a very common bird practically seen through out our country. This bird belongs to the order coraci formes and family coracidae. The kingfishers, bee eaters, hoopoe and hornbills also belong to the same order but each form a separate family. Most of these birds are insectivorous and have strongly built beaks for the purpose. The coloration is usually bright. There are a few representatives of the family Coracidae in India. Apart from the Indian Roller (in which there are different races) we have the Kashmir roller in the North and the less seen broad billed roller along the Western Ghats.



The Indian Roller though known as the Blue-Jay is not by any chance a Jay. True Jays are related to the crows and nowhere near the rollers or kingfishers. This bird is a gaudy bird and cannot be mistaken for any thing else. As the name suggests it is blue. The top of the head or crown shows a patch of blue. The back is brown and so are the throat and breast. The throat is streaked. The wings and tail, a combination of pale and darker shades of blue, are very striking in flight. The abdomen is pale blue and the beak is black. In size it is as big as a pigeon.

The Indian Roller is seen more commonly in open cultivated or drier areas. It likes to sit on trees, stumps, fences, lamp posts, electric wires and periodically pounce down upon insects on the ground which are finished off back on the 'post'. Fields when ploughed or harvested attract a good number of this bird. Being primarily insectivorous it brings about great deal of check on the insect population especially on agricultural lands. The bird has a very unattractive throat and the call is usually uttered in a series of coarse screams in flight or in abrupt 'chucks' when at rest. A spectacular aerobatic performance of somersaults and dives is very often performed during the breeding season. The breeding season normally falls between the months of March and July. I have seen courting pairs of rollers in March. The male I saw mounted the female holding it by the head with its beak which in turn took up a submissive pose with its head stretched out horizontally. Copulation was achieved and in the process a series of a milder version of the usual screams was uttered. Nesting is done in natural tree-hollows. A dead palmyrah (*Borassus*) palm is much preferred.

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### Correspondence

The crows by T.V.Jose: Now we are right in the nesting season of common house crows. This is the time they choose their nesting sites, make their nests, mate, lay their eggs, incubate, feed the brood, and lastly their young ones fly away. Strangely, brooding crows are attacked by members of their own species from time to time. But the brooding bird does not fly away from its tormentors, but steadfastly keeps on the eggs. Is it that the attack is timed when the partner is away from the vicinity of the nest? And at the sight of him (or her) is the operation wound up? If not, what makes the plunder stop? I for once find this corvian behaviour strange, since I have never come across similar incidents among other birds.

Do not such attacks aim at removing the bird on the eggs? In that event what will be the attackers' next step? Will they destroy the eggs?

Or is the attack only to drive away the bird from her eggs and prevent brooding, with the eggs getting addled?

Is it a method devised by nature to reduce reproduction and stabilize corvian population which is increasing at a rapid pace in the absence of any serious danger to the species from other predatory ones?

I have been unable to understand how crows pick their mates. Would some of the readers enlighten me through these columns? That will help me understand many other aspects of these most common, and most intelligent birds.

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Eyes as evaporators by Acharva Dwarakanath, Udipi 576101: The bird's eyes also help in regulating the body temperature. When a bird has to fly long distances (as in migration) the excess body heat is dissipated through the eyes by evaporation of well supplied tears. This point has not been mentioned in the May-June 83 issue of Newsletter in the relevant article.

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Extract from a letter from Taei Mundkar to Lavkumar Khacher 124/9, Erandavana, Poona 411004: During my stay in Bombay (11th May - 25th June) I was able to

make a weekend trip to Karnala which was fairly interesting, as it was the first time that I heard a barking deer call at 8.00 am, in the evenings we watched wild boar feed under a mango tree. We saw a pitta and a few glimpses of the shama whose call was lovely. The racket tailed drongo had a nest with young, the rather broken down nest at first did not appear to be inhabited till the parents came along with food. The spotted babbler, scimitar babbler, grey fronted green pigeon, emerald dove were amongst the other birds seen.

We accompanied Mr. H. Abdul Ali one night on a trip around Bovivili National Park in a jeep with a 12 volt search light that helped us locate 3 wild boar, 3 hare and 30 odd cheetal along the lake side. We did not come across any leopard. We heard the brown hawk owl, Indian cuckoo, barred jungle owlet call at 12.30 am from different areas of the park.

I managed to buy a pair of vernier calipers and take a census of 10 house crow nests in the golf course at Colaba on the 9th June 1983. 4 nests were empty, 2 had young, one with 3 young, one with only one. 4 nests had eggs. One with one, one with two, two with three eggs. The size average of six eggs were 36.8 x 26.4 mm. The size given in the handbook is 37.2 x 27 mm.. But I don't feel that 6 eggs is enough evidence for any thought about size change.

Back to Poona again; the late monsoons have kept the yellow wattled lapwings nesting from mid May to yesterday when we found a nest with 3 eggs. The bird allowed us to come within 3 feet of it without taking of from the nest.

The Franklin wren warblers are chirping about so I have started looking for their nests. Not one bird seems to be carrying nesting material yet. On the other hand the ashy wren warblers have finished nesting, 3 chicks of 4 in a nest in my garden got their first flying lessons today.

The magpie robin in the nest box is probably having a second brood having laid 3 eggs after the first brood of chicks mysteriously disappeared one day, two days after we discovered that a white breasted kingfisher had discovered that a good collection of fish filled my pond above which was the nest box. According to Salim Ali's book the kingfisher does take young birds so this possibility cannot be ruled out.

The Indian robins are also nesting. The pied crested cuckoos have arrived some time ago and are a pretty sight against the grey rain clouds.

Found two nests of the little minivet along the NDA road one with 3 chicks in it, one was still being built. A friend found a nest of a white breasted waterhen with 5 eggs. I will be going tomorrow to try and photograph it.

We had been last Sunday to a place called Bhigwan, 106 kms on the Sholapur road south east of Poona where we saw two groups of greater flamingos. One of 16 birds the other of 24. I managed to get fairly close and take some shots the results of which I am still waiting for. It seems that around 3000 birds were seen here about 6 weeks ago, reports from a friend were that 300-400 was probably a more correct figure. But it is very difficult to say as the area where the Flamingos are, is very large and they are not in one large flock but many small ones.

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Breeding notes: (The Fragile Nature Balance) by Y.M.Rai,  
414 Uttam Batika, W.Kutchery Road, Meerut 250 001:  
 Finn's Bayas (*Ploceus megarhynchus*). The breeding of this bird has been observed by the author since June 1979 in Hastinapur marshland, 35 kms north east of Meerut. Most of my observations were related to a Seesam tree (*Dalbergia sissoo*) atop which they bred every June-July in more than 30 nests. It was a joy to observe the displaying males in brilliant yellow, and the females busy with their chores. In 1981 man's destructive hands felled the tree. When the males arrived in June they attempted to make nests on a nearby Mango tree and a tall Jamun tree. They succeeded building half a dozen nests only on the mango tree. The birds, this summer colonised both the mango and jamun trees with a dozen nests, most of them on the jamun. As is the case every year, the breeding was over by the end of the 3rd week of July. The mango and jamun leaves are tougher to break but the birds defoliated the tree tops as they used to do with the Seesam. It is a case of partly successful adaptation. How long will it hold out is to be seen. Already since 1979, there is a very great deal reduction in Finn's baya breeding on trees in marshland, and it is now a rare sight to find a tree with their colony. Why the birds choose a particular tree for breeding is nature's unsolved mystery, because about fifty yards farther than the nesting tree there are seesam trees with the same marsh ecosystem, feeding ground and nesting material growing.

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Birds in the Okhla barrage by J.L. Singh. C-494. Defence colony. New Delhi 110 024: My friend, Sudhir Kala and myself, along with my two boys aged 9 and 7, scootered to the Okhla barrage on the Yamuna in New Delhi. A short distance upstream from the barrage is a largish island in the middle of the river; about half of the island is cultivated while the other half is covered with reed and open grass meadows. There are virtually no trees. A small village with about half a dozen huts has come up in one corner of the land.

We got carried to the island in a flat-bottomed boat. We spent about an hour and a half on the island itself. The date was 22nd May 1983 and the time 6.00 am. Among the more interesting experiences were:

- a) Small Indian skylarks (*Alauda gulgula*) caught our attention. There were any number of them, and we saw one delivering its nuptial song in the sky. One of the skylarks gave a rather impressive performance. We first caught sight of it when it was about 20' above the ground and with wings fluttering it had started its spirited warbling. For the next minute it kept going higher and higher till it became a mere speck in the sky. There it remained stationary at one place, continuing its warbling. After several minutes it showed signs of descending. Once the descent started, it was fast, and in 30 seconds it was on the ground. The total time the bird was in the air was  $9\frac{1}{2}$  minutes.
- b) Later we found a nest of a skylark under a tussock of grass. It had 3 chicks, fully feathered. The chicks lying one on top of the other and showed no signs of life while we examined the nest. Seems to show that the skylarks continue their display flight after chicks have hatched.
- c) Saw a yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava*). At this time of the year it should not be here at all. Anyway it was in breeding plumage, bright yellow below, olive back and grey head complete with white supercilium. The reason for its being left behind soon became obvious. One of its wings was drooping badly making it unable to fly. It was probably the safety of the island that saved it from becoming an easy prey to some hungry cat.
- d) Found two nests of red wattled lapwings. One had 4 eggs and one three. Both nests were in rather exposed locations and not hidden. Also, both were in the middle

of old, dried up cow-dung heaps. Camouflage was very good. We found a dog on the island but it was doing no apparent harm to these ground nesting birds.

e) Found a pied bushchat (*Saxicola caprata*) pair. The male had an insect in its beak on one occasion but we could not locate its nest.

f) Among other interesting birds seen were purple heron, pheasant tailed jacana, various terns including gull-billed and river, painted stork, cotton teal, a pair of spot-bills, etc.

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Yellow bittern nesting in Pune by Shri Taji Mundkur, 124/9, Erandavana, Poona 411004: Two weeks ago at the Telco lake, we found the nest of a yellow bittern with 3 chicks. I managed to get a few photos but they are not too clear. [This is an interesting find. The yellow bittern (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) is not usually found in Poona. The Synopsis says that it was found once in Northern Bombay in August] Editor.

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Extracts from a letter by Graham Madge to Lavkumar Kacher, 'Firway End', George Hill, Crediton, Devon EX17 2DS:  
I have checked with Ripley's Synopsis and my total list of birds seen comes to 140 of which 74 were additions to my life list. 28 of these were seen during the few days I spent at Chandigarh on my return journey. It was too hot there to do anything energetic but I got out early in the morning and saw some very nice birds. The most interesting was a couple of Indian pittas in the rough ground behind the rock garden, and I also had black partridge and stone curlew there. In the foothills I had a splendid male paradise flycatcher, blossomheaded parakeet and grey-headed flycatcher warbler. Birds were abundant where I was staying in the suburbs at Chandigarh - golden orioles, green barbets, little green bee eaters, brahminy mynas, Indian robins etc. etc. in the gardens, four species of parasitic cuckoo in the area - cuckoo, common hawk and Indian cuckoos and koel, plus coucal in the rough area; common and jungle babblers very common and yellow-eyed babbler also seen and four species of dove: spotted, red turtle, collared and little brown.

I visited Richard (Waller) a few days ago and had a good chat about my visit and the birds I saw. He was quite envious of the black and yellow grosbeak and the beautiful niltava as he has not seen either, and I must say they were among the best birds I saw in the hills, though the fire-capped tits and the yellow-naped yuhina both surprised me more as I simply could not place either of them when first encountered. It was immensely exciting too to see all those raptors and the two breeding records of booted eagle may be an extension of the known breeding range as the Synopsis records only 'Occasional breeding records from India in the north (Punjab). With no mention of breeding in the Western Himalayas.

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*Cover Picture:* Common Green Bee-Eater — Courtesy E. HANUMANTHA RAO

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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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## ಹೊಸ ದಿಗಂತಗಳತ್ತ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ರಾಜ್ಯೋತ್ಸವಕ್ಕೊಂದು ಹೊಸದಿಕ್ಕು

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಜನತೆಯ ಆದರ್ಶ, ಆದೇಶಗಳಿಗೆ ಅನುಸಾರವಾಗಿ, ರಾಜಕೀಯ, ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಮಗ್ರ ಸುಧಾರಣೆ ಮಾಡಿ, ಜನಜೀವನದಲ್ಲಿ ಉನ್ನತ ಮೌಲ್ಯಗಳ ಪ್ರತಿಷ್ಠಾಪನೆಗೆ, ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ನಿಷ್ಠಾವಂತ, ನಿರಂತರ ಯತ್ನ ನಡೆಸಿದೆ.

ಜನಕೋಟಿ ಇರಿಸಿರುವ ವಿಶ್ವಸದಪ್ರತೀಕ — ಈ ಸಾಧನೆಗಳ ಸಾಲು :

ಸ್ವಚ್ಛ ನಿರಾಡಂಬರ ಆಡಳಿತ. ಸಕ್ಷಾಂತರ ಪಿಡುಗಿನ ನಿವಾರಣೆಗೆ ಮಸೂದೆ. ಬೃಷ್ಟಾಚಾರ ಮೂಲೋತ್ಪಾಟನೆಗೆ 'ಲೋಕ ಆಯುಕ್ತ' ರಚನೆ. ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ಕುಂದುಕೊರತೆಗಳ ಶೀಘ್ರ ನಿವಾರಣೆಗೆ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಸಚಿವ ಶಾಖೆ.

ಆಡಳಿತ ಎಲ್ಲ ಹಂತಗಳಲ್ಲೂ ಕನ್ನಡದ ಬಳಕೆ—ಅದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಕಾನೂನು ಸಮಿತಿ ರಚನೆ. ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕನ್ನಡ ಕಲಿಕೆ ಕಡ್ಡಾಯ.

ನಿಜವಾದ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ತು, ಮಂಡಲ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ ಮತ್ತು ನ್ಯಾಯ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಗೆ ವಿಧೇಯಕ. ಮಾತುಕೊಟ್ಟಂತೆ ನಗರಸಭೆ, ಪುರಸಭೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಚುನಾವಣೆ ನಡೆಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಅದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಮತದಾರರ ವಯೋಮಿತಿ 18ಕ್ಕೆ ಇಳಿಸಿರುವುದೇ ಅಲ್ಲದೆ ಈ ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಶೇಕಡ 20ರಷ್ಟು ಸ್ಥಾನ ಮೀಸಲು.

ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗದವರ ಏಳಿಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಇದೇ ಪ್ರಥಮವಾಗಿ ಅಲ್ಪ ಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಹಿತರಕ್ಷಣೆಗೆ ಪರಿಣಾಮಕಾರಿ ಸಲಹೆ ಮಾಡಲು ಎರಡು ಆಯೋಗ ರಚನೆ. ಕೋಮುವಾರು ಸೌಹಾರ್ದ ಸಾಧನೆಗೆ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು ಮಟ್ಟದ ಮಂಡಲಿಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ.

ಪ್ರತಿಭಾವಂತ ಹರಿಜನ-ಗಿರಿಜನ ಯುವಕ-ಯುವತಿಯರಿಗೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಉನ್ನತ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ ಮಟ್ಟದಲ್ಲಿ ನೇರ ನೇಮಕ ಮಾಡುವ ಅವಕಾಶ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಬಹುಕಾಲದಿಂದ ಆಗದೇ ಇರುವ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯ ಸುಧಾರಣೆಗೆ ಸಮಗ್ರ ಮಸೂದೆಯೊಂದು ರಚಿತವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಹಾಗೂ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸಂಬಂಧಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹೊಸ ಚಿಂತನೆ. ಆಡಳಿತದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊಸ ವಿಚಾರ ಅಳವಡಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಹಾಗೂ ಯೋಜನಾ ಮಂಡಲಿಗಳ ರಚನೆ.

ಕೈಗಾರಿಕಾ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆಗೆ ಪ್ರೇರಕವಾದ ಹೊಸ ಧೋರಣೆ. ಉದ್ಯೋಗಾವಕಾಶ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿಸುವ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ, ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಗೆ ಎಲ್ಲ ಸೌಕರ್ಯಗಳೂ ಒಂದೇ ಕಡೆ ದೊರೆಯುವ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಮಟ್ಟದ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ. ತಿಂಗಳಿಗೆ 1000 ಹೊಸ ಸಣ್ಣ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಗೆ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ.

ಪ್ರತಿ ಹಳ್ಳಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಐದು ಬಡ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳ ಏಳಿಗೆ ಸಾಧಿಸುವ 'ಅಂತೋದಯ' ಯೋಜನೆ.

ರೈತರಿಗೆ ಈವರೆಗೆ ಐವತ್ತು ಕೋಟಿ ರೂಪಾಯಿ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿ ಸೌಕರ್ಯ.

13,500 ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳನ್ನು ತೋಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. 10,000 ಗ್ರಾಮಗಳಿಗೆ ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರಿನ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ 40,000 ಜನಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಊರುಗಳಲ್ಲಿಲ್ಲ ಅನೌಪಚಾರಿಕ ಪಡಿತರ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯ ವಿಸ್ತರಣೆ.

ವರದಕ್ಷಿಣೆ ಸಾವು ನೋವು ಪ್ರಕರಣಗಳನ್ನು ಸಿ. ಓ. ಡಿ. ತನಿಖೆಗೆ ಒಪ್ಪಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ವೃದ್ಧರು ಹಾಗೂ ಅಂಗವಿಕಲರ ಪರಿಹಾರ ವೇತನ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

### ಜನಮನಕ್ಕೆ ಸ್ಪಂದಿಸುವ ಸರ್ಕಾರ — ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಾರ್ತೆ

ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

NEWSLETTER  
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXIII

November-December, 1983

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SUBSCRIPTION FOR 1984 — Rs. 15

WILL BE APPRECIATED. THOSE WHO HAVE  
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NEWSLETTER FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Editor

## Editorial

Eucalyptus and birds--The Eucalyptus controversy continues and H.N.Mathur of the Forest Research Institute has sent me a number of reprints indicating that Eucalyptus does not result in soil erosion or in damaging the environment in any manner. I have also received some data from Australia, which is yet to be digested. Apparently in this country, the home of the Eucalyptus, conservationists are worried about a new invader in *Pinus radiata* which it is feared will displace Eucalyptus and upset the natural balance.

I find that I am now getting less hostile to the Eucalyptus, because it is not a fact that in Eucalyptus plantations 'no birds sing'. During a recent visit to Hassan district, for example I was able to see that in a stud farm where 30,000 eucalyptus had been planted, the ground cover was excellent. There were a large number of eucalyptus *citreadora* together with other species of eucalyptus and it has a fair assortment of birds. Also during a recent visit to Bandipur I saw that the Brahminy myna and the grey headed myna ate the berries of *Eucalyptus teriticornis* and some birds probed into the inflorescence for nectar. We should not therefore condemn all species of eucalyptus out of hand. Of course they have no place in our national parks and sanctuaries. We need more facts before we can entertain opinions and I revert to my earlier request to readers to send me notes about birds which they see in eucalyptus plantations.

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Clever birds: In the July-August issue of Bird Watchers Digest, there is an incredible account about the resourcefulness of birds when it comes to feeding the family. Writing about 'A Bad Lands Bird' - Lillie Jones refers to a wren which collected insects from the radiators of all the cars which halted at a motel. 'As soon as a car pulled in and the motor was turned off, it hopped under the vehicle, up inside the bumper, and in front of the radiator. Service stations in the good old days didn't give this kind of service! At first we could not determine what was so attractive about these dirty, hot vehicles in this desolate land. The bird certainly was not looking for warmth on this day. Then came our awakening. When it reappeared from under the vehicle, the bird's mouth was running over with exotic insects from all over the United States and Canada. It



then flew away across a sandy peak to waiting mouths to feed. It amazed us at its ingenuity for making use of this otherwise unavailable food for its babies.

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The Compact Edition of the Handbook : This new production in spite of its formidable price will be a great help to all serious bird watchers. I give the following information from the blurb of the cover: 'There are estimated to be about 8600 species of birds living in the world today, arranged under 28 Natural Orders. Of these, some 1200 species in 20 Orders and numerous Families are known to occur in the Indian subcontinent. The Handbook describes the 1200 species: detailed feather-by-feather descriptions are not attempted, and the work confines itself to recording concisely the distribution, habits, breeding biology, diet, voice etc. of the birds in the area. The complete work contains 113 colour plates, which illustrate some 985 species under 72 families. With the help of these and the systematic keys in the text, the bird-watcher and the scientific ornithologist should be able to identify most of the birds they see and all those that they handle. Maps show the distribution of many migratory and spatially restricted forms and a number of line drawings illustrate diagnostic features such as bills and feet.

In the Compact Edition the text of the Handbook appears in a photographically reduced form, with four pages of the original occupying one page of the Compact Edition. The text type and black-and-white illustrations in the main body of the work have been reduced to seventy percent of their original size and remain legible to the normal eye. The colour plates, however, appear in the same size as in the original editions'.

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Preston Ahimaz in Mauritius: The bulletin of the Madras Naturalists' Society of October 1983 says - 'our member, Mr. Preston Ahimaz, who is with Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, Channel Islands, undergoing a course on captive breeding of endangered species..... has been deputed to make a preliminary survey of the Mauritius Parakeet (*Psittacula echo*) from September to December 1983. These birds number 6-8 individuals in the world. He will be working under Mr. Carl Jones, who is presently working on one of the World's most endangered bird of prey - Mauritius Kestrel.

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International meeting on bustards in Peshawar, Pakistan, October 1983: Salim Ali was naturally one of those invited to the meeting. Apparently, the Pakistan government is in a dilemma over saving the Houbara bustard. The rich sheikhs from Arabia come yearly with their falcons to hunt this bustard and Pakistan like other countries is lured by their foreign exchange. It was therefore thought that if an international conference made an impartial assessment of the status of this bird, the Government could take action without ruffling the feathers of the sheikhs. Incidentally Salim Ali was impressed by the attitude of the Pakistani officials towards conversation. The President Gen. Zia Haq took a keen interest in the proceedings. The meeting revolved, and the Pakistan Government agreed to a moratorium on the hunting of the Houbara for a period of 5 years, after which the situation would be reviewed. The magnitude of hunting pressure can be gauged from this report on Houbara Bastards by Paul D. Goriup in the book Bastards in Decline:

'Pressure on the population: In common with several other bustard species, the Houbara is a game bird. Thus, it has to bear the burden of mortality from hunting, in addition to the normal natural population controls (food availability, predation and disease). It is particularly favoured as a quarry by Arab falconers ('shikaris') who prize the spectacle of two powerful birds engaged in mortal combat, although the falcon (usually a Saker (Falco cherrug), but Peregrines (F. peregrinus) are occasionally flown) generally triumphs. The rising popularity of this ancient sport among the now wealthy Arabian ruling classes, and the increasing scarcity of the 'Talur' in the Gulf countries, has led them to seek hunting grounds further afield. The large population wintering in Pakistan has become a prime target for sheikhs from Abu Dhabi, Baharin, Dubai, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. However the effort and commitment of the shikaris is now such that each year an estimated 3,000 individuals are caught and killed, while at least several hundreds more birds are killed by local sportsmen.

This substantial bag has given rise to great consternation amongst wildlife conservationists over the species' future, so that finally, late in 1979, the Sind Wildlife Management Board, on the authority of the President's Office, requested help from IUCN/WWF in instigating a project for the conservation of the Houbara bustard. This assistance was duly provided, using technical expertise from the ICBP bustard group'.

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Status of storks, ibises and spoonbills: In the May-June issue, we carried a request from Charles S. Luthin regarding the status of these birds. Mr. Shantilal Varu of Madhapur, Kutch-Bhuj 370020, has taken the trouble to send information about these birds in the Kutch area of Gujarat. His report deals with painted storks, white storks, open bill storks, black necked storks, glossy, white and black ibis, and spoon bills. Incidentally as Shri Varu writes, the concentration of birds in Kutch depends very much on rainfall and the population varies substantially from year to year depending on monsoon conditions. I hope other readers too will write direct to the Director of the Working Group. For convenience the address is repeated:- Director, Working Group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills Vogelpark, Walsrode Am Reiselbach, West Germany.

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Coastal birds in and around Madras by V. Santharam, No. 68, (1st floor) Santhome High Road, Madras 600 028: The coastal areas around Madras and its environs have a rich and varied birdlife. The isolated beaches, the estuaries, shallow lagoons, the adjoining marshal lands, fresh water tanks and open meadows have always been a source of fascination and joy for the birdwatcher. Apart from the winter visitors, these areas host thousands of passage migrants in late autumn and again in spring.

Frigate birds are typical marine birds, seldom seen on land, except while breeding. But the least frigate bird (*Fregata ariel*) noticed in flight on two occasions were casual visitors, perhaps blown to land by stormy weather conditions.

Many species of water birds such as cormorants, egrets, herons, storks, pelicans, flamingoes occur in Madras. The grey pelican is a fairly common bird at Pulicat, where it feeds in the shallow areas. The Nelapattu pelicanry, one of the last known homes of this fast vanishing species is located close to this lake. Flamingoes are also fairly common around Madras and both species have been recorded here. The lesser flamingo appears to be scarcer of the two. The reef herons are invariably seen at Pulicat during winter and 1-2 are found at the Adyar Estuary, near the mouth of the river. The little green bittern is a shy and



retiring bird of the tidal creeks and mangroves of the Estuary. The rare white stork may be seen at the edge of tanks, marshes and occasionally on meadows.

Ducks and teals of various species pour in during winter and the 'V' formation of these birds on the wing is not an unusual sight for the Madras birdwatcher. Spotbill, garganey, pintail, shoveler, wigeon and tufted ducks are some of the commoner species that may be met with here. Once at Pulicat, I came across a couple of brahminy ducks and at Chembarambakkam tank, near Madras, white-eyed pochards were seen once.

Brahminy kites are useful scavengers at the harbours and fishing hamlets. Another raptor of the coastal areas and estuaries is the magnificent white-bellied sea eagle. A pair are known to haunt the Adyar Estuary and the sighting of an immature eagle confirmed my suspicions that this bird must be nesting close by. I have seen the osprey twice at Pulicat and once at Manali in winter. On 7th June, 1982, I spotted one at the Pichavaram Mangrove Swamps, while cruising around in canoes, suggesting that this species might be a resident bird there.

Waders or shorebirds are perhaps our most abundant winter visitors. They range from the curlew, the largest, to the little stint, the smallest. Many species of plovers, sandpipers, snipes, stints and godwits are regular visitors to our estuaries, marshes and tanks. Avocets are uncommon passage migrants. The rare ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), which may be confused for the little ringed plover, has been recorded at Adyar. It is seen on mudflats, sandbars and edges of water in the Adyar river. The red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) has been seen just once in a pool of water at Velacherry. The Oystercatcher is another rare bird that inhabits the seashore, estuaries etc. of the East coast of India and has been recorded twice at Adyar Estuary.

Gulls and terns are very much a part of our coastal environment, though some of them are found inland. Four species of gulls and thirteen tern species have so far been identified within 100 km radius of Madras. The brown headed gull is a common bird of Madras in winter. Gullbilled, whiskered, caspian and little terns are the commoner terns. The whitewinged black tern is undoubtedly a passage migrant. The large crested and lesser crested terns are seen occasionally, resting on sandbars of the Adyar river.

It is distressing to note that inspite of legislation, the exploitation of birds by man is still going on. This is more severe in the case of waders, which are being netted in thousands all along our coastline by local trappers to be sold in the local markets and the waterfowl which are the targets of trigger-happy sportsmen. Further the pollution of our rivers and beaches, draining of marshes and construction of housing colonies in open meadows foretell a grim future for our winged visitors from the north.

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Bird watching in Jamaica (West Indies) by Prof. Dinesh Mohan, Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee 247 667, India: I have recently returned from Jamaica after a year's stay in that beautiful island known for its mountains, sun, white sand, and beaches. Jamaica is a small island lying eastwest in the Carribean sea, almost next door to Cuba. It is 250 miles long and 59 miles across at its widest portion, with a mountain running east west almost along its entire length. The highest peak of the mountain is called blue mountain peak which is about 7500 ft. height. The entire blue mountain area is very rich in birds, trees and flowers.

I had interesting bird-watching trips with members of their 'GOSSE' birdwatchers society. 'GOSSE' was an eminent birdwatcher and his book on birdwatching is almost a treatise like the one by Whistler in India. James Bond was another famous birdwatcher of Jamaica and his book on 'Birdwatching in West Indies' is very popular amongst amateur birdwatchers in Jamaica. This James Bond is the same person who was made famous by Ian Flemming, the author of James Bond popular series. Ian Flemming wrote most of his novels from Jamaica and James Bond happened to be his close friend. The name of his friend appealed to him greatly and he chose to make him the hero of his famous novels.

Jamaica has some attractive birds though it has none of house sparrows, mynahs and house crows. It does not have snakes either. It has plenty of mongoose and it appears that they have been partly responsible for elimination of snakes on the island. The National bird of Jamaica is the streamer tail humming-bird, popularly known as Doctor Bird. It is a lovely small bird with a long twin tail and it reminded me of our own paradise fly catcher.

Other common birds on the island are quits, orioles, wood peckers, todys saffron finches, eagles, cattle egrets, parakeets, white chinned thrush. Special mention must be made of a type of owl called pattoo. It is the size of a crow and lies vertical along the stem of a tree and is very quiet during the day. There are 24 species of birds endemic to Jamaica and their list is given below along with their popular names:

- |                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Pigeon, ring tailed         | - Ring tail             |
| 2. Dove, crested quail         | - Mountain witch        |
| 3. Parrot, yellow billed       | - -                     |
| 4. Parrot, black billed        | - -                     |
| 5. Cuckoo, chestnut bellied    | - Old man bird          |
| 6. Cuckoo, lizard, Jamaican    | - Old woman bird        |
| 7. Owl, Jam.                   | - Pattoo, brown owl     |
| 8. Humming-bird, Jam., mango   | - Humming bird          |
| 9. Humming-bird, streamer-tail | - Doctor bird           |
| 10. Tody, Jam.                 | - Robin red breast      |
| 11. Woodpecker, Jam.           | - Woodpecker            |
| 12. Becard, Jam.               | - Judy, mountain duck   |
| 13. Flycatcher, rufous tailed  | - Big head fool         |
| 14. Eleanea, yellow crowned    | - -                     |
| 15. Crow, Jam.                 | - Jabbering crow        |
| 16. Thrush, white chinned      | - Hopping dick          |
| 17. Thrush, white eyed, Jam.   | - Glass eye             |
| 18. Vireo, white eye           | - -                     |
| 19. Warbler, arrow headed      | - Ants bird             |
| 20. Orange quit                | - Long mouth blue quit  |
| 21. Euphonia, Jam.             | - Short mouth blue quit |
| 22. Black bird, Jam.           | - Wild pine seargent    |
| 23. Finch, yellow shouldered   | - Yellow back           |
| 24. Vireo, blue mountain       | - -                     |

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Dusky crag martin collecting its nest material by Arun Kumar Banerjee. Research Fellow (Wildlife Project) Dept. of Biosciences, Rajkot-360005, Gujarat: On 25th September 1983 when I was assisting one of the M.Sc. final year students of my department for his dissertation assignment, surveying the avifauna and the vegetational occurrence in and around the Lalpari Dam Reservoir (22.17° N, 70.48° E) situated on the outskirts of Rajkot city in an urban habitat, I noticed a brown colored bird slightly smaller than a sparrow, banking and wheeling over me, finally settling within a few meters of the reservoir where a small pool of water has been formed. It kept flying away to the quarry adjacent to the reservoir. To have a clear vision of the bird in the pool without causing any



disturbance I settled myself a few meters away from the pool. Focusing my binocular (12 x 50) on the bird in the pool, I identified it as a dusky crag martin (Hirundo concolor) from its muddy brown underparts, light brown upperparts with a slightly forked tail. The bird was scrapping away the soft mud from the margin of the pool with its beak vigorously moving its head right and left. The scrapped soft mud took a shape of a small ball in its beak and the bird flew away with it towards the quarry. When it was on the way to the quarry another dusky crag martin appeared, scrapped the soft mud from the margin of the pool in the same manner and followed the same path to the quarry. This activity was continued by the two dusky crag martins. Each time they collected the soft mud it took a shape of a small ball in its beak after which they carried it to the quarry. Focusing my binoculars on the perpendicular walls of the quarry where the birds flew after carrying the mud I noticed that, they were busy making a nest. Both the birds no doubt were a pair because they were engaged in constructing the same nest. Without this clue, it would be impossible to identify the sex of these birds because the sexes look alike. The nest was taking the form of a saucer attached bracketwise to the quarry wall. Forming the scrapped soft mud into a small ball shape seems to be a convenient way of carrying it to the nesting site.

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Old memories by ZF: It is possible that some of this may have appeared in a previous Newsletter, but I hope that at least the new subscribers will not resent the repetition. Like all good sport, birdwatching too, is being ruined by the spirit of competition. The largest Day List, and the longest Life List is what people are after, and parties of birdwatchers are jetting around the world to beat their rivals in this game. One of the rules of the game is that a bird which has been touched by the human hand is no longer in the category of a wild bird, and so one unfortunate rail, a rare vagrant whose presence was noted and advertised, was unceremoniously handled by a life lister so that those who followed him to the spot would not be entitled to add it to their list. One fanatic writes: 'It is not possible to describe the feeling inspired during the microsecond when the image of a new bird moves from the cells of the retina to register upon those of the cerebrum'.

In a way I am a more serious birdwatcher than these life listers for I enjoy watching the same birds over and

over again. When the light is right, and when you have focussed on a golden oriole on a casurina tree where the foliage is thin and does not obstruct your view, and when the back drop is the morning blue of the sky, one cannot give up the pleasure of shifting the focus away to other creatures in the hope of seeing a rarer one. In a way there is more to learn by watching the same birds intensively rather than by flitting butterfly like from item to item. If I remember right, my highest day list has been 93, on a farm in the U.P., and my highest around Bombay has been 75. I make this confession to indicate that I am a poor watcher, because Peter Jackson clocked 175 species around Delhi in a single day in February.

My most enjoyable moments with birds have been in our garden in Bombay and Bangalore and I have written often about this. With regard to calculated attempts to see birds, Koyna was a rare experience. The hills and valleys around the Koyna dam in Maharashtra abound with birds, and February is a good time to be there, for the bright red flowers of the Bombax, Erythrina and the Flame of the Forest are all a glow, and red flowers are a great attraction for nectar drinking birds. In fact there are few birds which are not fond of drinking nectar. Drongos, crows, mynas, starlings, and sunbirds of course add lustre to these flowering trees and to use an Indian expression 'sone per sohaga charate hain'. One day I was intrigued by a pair of wiretailed swallows which kept visiting a boulder in the middle of the river. I thought there might be a nest, so I stripped and swam across. It was exciting to discover the little nest and two eggs. Whether on the wing or on the ground wiretailed swallows are one of our most elegant resident birds, their steel blue feathers, snow white underside and chestnut cap is a colour combination hard to beat. Returning to the dak bungalow around sunset, I heard bird voices emanating from a well foliated tree and I thought I had run into what the ornithologists call a mixed hunting party of several species of tits, warblers, minivets, bulbuls and others. To my astonishment the tree was bare of birds and the solitary occupant was a rufous backed shrike imitating to perfection the calls of these other species. So competent are some birds in mimicking the calls of others that they memorise accurately the song patterns and cadences of migrants which are no longer in the vicinity. The chloropsis or green bulbul is another bird which can confound birds watchers by their mimicking.

Gujarat is a very satisfying place for the birdwatcher because the tradition of not harming any form of life has

resulted in their placing a surprising confidence in humans. Partridge, quail, peafowl, sarus cranes and all the other arboreal and land species allow the closest approach and it is a great thrill to see wild birds in such close proximity. It is the migrant larks, warblers, the waders and the duck, used to harsher treatment in many places in their palaearctic homes which shy away at the approach of human kind.

During a visit to Kutch in Saurashtra we had a unique experience. In a tumble down porch of a building we found the nest of a Redrumped swallow in near perfect conditions. What drew our attention was the tail feather of the adult sticking out of the aperture. It was not the breeding season so it was strange that a bird should be in the nest. A closer look revealed a tragedy. It is customary with these birds to keep repairing and embellishing their nests even on the last visit to their nests at night. Obviously what had happened was that the entrance hole was plastered with wet mud before retiring for the night, and when it hardened by the morning the exit was too small for the bird to emerge. When we broke open the nest we found the whole family of swallows entombed inside. Nature is an unforgiving task master, and since this swallow was a bad architect it had to pay with its life for its incompetence.

Another rather memorable experience was in Bhutan with Salim Ali. This Himalayan kingdom is a paradise for birds. Every bush and tree is laden with the most exquisitely shaped and coloured creatures. While we were having our fill of delights, a group of sober coloured birds landed on a tree in front of us. These were the longtailed sibilas with ashy brown bodies and white wing bars. What surprised Salim Ali was the white forehead of the birds. He was pretty certain that these Sibilas were not supposed to have white foreheads. Being the meticulous naturalist he is, he wanted to make sure by having a bird in the hand for inspection. The next morning he shot a Sibia and discovered that the forehead was peppered with the pollen of white flowers. This proved the value of the old adage that a bird in hand is worth several in the bush.

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### Correspondence

Taej Mundkur : Bulbul nesting: A redvented bulbul has nested in our room on top of the pelmet. Three eggs were laid, two hatched, one chick was killed. And the survivor, a spritely feathered chick that took a few trial flights today. I imagine it will fly away in a few days.

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Shri Shivraikumar Khachar: Albino crows and one way migrants in Kutch: Yesterday I saw a complete albino white house crow near Jasdan. The bill is pinkish. I have never seen a complete albino crow here. My son tells me there were 3 in the Mysore zoo. It would be interesting to know of other records of this albino.

Kutch is such an interesting place at this time of the year with the circular one way autumn migration of several species of birds like spotted flycatcher, Indian whitethroat, red backed shrike, rufous warbler, Kashmir roller, European nightjar etc.

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Rathin Mukherjee: Whitebreasted waterhens in Jammu and Kashmir and black kalj in Himalayan forest: During late autumn, while we were exploring Jammu area under the guidance of Dr.H.Khazuria we located a pair of waterhens on a vast sheet of water of the famous Mansar lake near Samba on Udhampur road. Again we observed two pairs after an interval of a fortnight in a small pond, rather a ditch, near the tourist office of Katra, adjacent to the bus stand.

The white breasted waterhen, so far, is not recorded beyond 33° N and 75° E. Katra is in Riase district (famous for the holy cave of Bashu Mata, in a hill top surrounded by Mirpur of Pakistan, Poonch, Srinagar, Udhampur and Jammu districts of J and K, India. The entire region is encircled by lofty peaks and we were surprised to observe waterhens in such remote pockets.

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The Black Kalij in Himalayan forest: On 21st June 83, we celebrated Suvendus birthday in Palma jua forest rest house. We had spent the night collecting owls and small mammals and we discovered to our surprise, the pug marks and the faeces of a large leopard in the same area. Naturally our further movements were some what cautious. But all of a sudden, we had a glimpse of a kalij amidst the ferns. We presume that it was the black kalij Lophura Leucomelana Melanota. This is an interesting species and the only recent sighting was by K.S.Ranjit Singh in central Bhu<sup>tan</sup> in June 1965.

At the end of February we were camping at the Youth hostel of Ghoom, Bengal. It was almost dark and we heard the repeated barks of barking bear which broke the monotonous orchestra of the cicada and other insects. Going through the Cryptomaria branches we came to an area as soft as a carpet, littered with shed pine needles, and here we saw a pair of barking deer. On seeing us they shot out like an arrow on the narrow bridle path. At that very moment from the undergrowth of ferns a flock of 6-7 brown birds, larger than the kalij pheasant walked through the cover. They were all eared pheasants. We were surprised because these eared pheasants are supposed to exist on the northern face of the Himalayas and at much higher altitudes. If our identification is correct, this means an extension of about 50 kms. in the known range of this species.

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Acharya Dwarakanath: Attack by spotted owlet: A friend of mine Mr.K.G.Prabhu of Udupi related a curious incident that happened on 11.11.83. As he was walking towards his house at 8.30 p.m. something brushed his head and flew towards a lamp post and he recognised it as the spotted owlet, *Athene brama*. Within seconds it dived again, and again brushed him. Soon Mr.Prabhu went into his house, fetched his flash light and walked towards the same lamp post. The bird dived again just as my friend flashed the torch which drew the bird away. This was not repeated on subsequent nights but on 24.11.83 at 8.00 pm there were two birds, but only one repeated the attack, the other bird remained a silent spectator. My friend changed his shirt, put a bath towel on his head and walked near the lamp post and lo! the owlet dived again towards its favourite target. What could be the reason for this curious attack on my friend?

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*Cover Picture:* Common Green Bee-Eater — Courtesy E. HANUMANTHA RAO

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